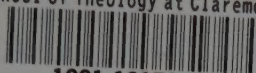


School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1397251

BX  
5129.8  
M4  
R5  
1868a



The Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE  
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA











THE RELATIONS  
OF  
JOHN WESLEY  
AND OF WESLEYAN METHODISM  
TO THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND,  
INVESTIGATED AND DETERMINED.

*By* JAMES H. RIGG, D.D.,  
AUTHOR OF "MODERN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY," "ESSAYS FOR THE TIMES," ETC.

LONDON:  
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW.  
1868.











BX  
5129.8  
M4  
R5  
1868a

THE RELATIONS

OF

JOHN WESLEY 1703-1791

AND OF WESLEYAN METHODISM

TO THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

INVESTIGATED AND DETERMINED.

By JAMES H. RIGG, D.D., 1821-1907

AUTHOR OF "MODERN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY," "ESSAYS FOR THE TIMES," ETC.

LONDON:

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW.

1868.

BX  
5129.8  
M4  
R5  
1868a

Theology Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California

LONDON:  
JAMES BEVERIDGE, PRINTER,  
9, 10, AND 11, FULLWOOD'S RENTS, HOLBORN, W.C.

Withdrawn  
Caret Biblical Institute  
EVA... ILLINOIS.



TO  
THE REV. WILLIAM ARTHUR, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF THE METHODIST COLLEGE, BELFAST.

---

MY DEAR FRIEND,

MORE than three-and-twenty years have past since you and I first met. The friendship which then began has been a chief help and blessing to me during all the years which have followed. On main points of principle and policy it has been my good fortune seldom to differ from you. Providence has now removed you, for a season, from England and from the centre of English Methodism to a post of great importance in Ireland. My regret because of your absence, especially at this time, from England, is qualified by the consideration that you are at the head of an Educational Institution, singularly comprehensive in its scope and complete in its departments, the effect of which not only on Irish Methodism, but on Ireland, may, at the

JUN 1 1912

1300

present crisis especially, prove to be peculiarly beneficial.

Whilst you are stationed for a while, however, in your native island, you belong still to the English Methodist Connexion. Knowing, therefore, as I do, that the views which are set forth in the following pages respecting the Relations of Methodism to the Church of England agree with those which you have long held, and which, twelve years ago, you published in the *London Quarterly Review*, I wish to dedicate this publication to you, both because of our long friendship, and that I may thus gain the advantage of your name to bespeak the more attentive consideration for that which is here advanced.

I remain, my dear Friend,

Ever yours affectionately,

JAMES H. RIGG.

WESTMINSTER,

October 15th, 1863.

## P R E F A C E.

---

FOR twenty-five years the writer of the following pages has been an earnest student of all that belongs to the history and opinions of the Wesley Brothers, and to the history and ecclesiastical development of Methodism. He has enjoyed rare advantages in pursuing his inquiries, and has been able to attain to definite conclusions and a tolerably complete view as regards many points of interest and importance,—as regards, in particular, the points involved in the inquiry to which this pamphlet relates. What is now published in this form is, with very few variations, a republication of an article contributed to the *London Quarterly Review* for July last. The review style has been changed, and the first person singular substituted for the plural first person; and some trifling corrections have been made. Otherwise the whole stands unaltered.

It is thus republished in compliance with the pressing request of many Methodists, ministers and laymen, including some of the most distinguished men in Methodism, and of those who have been appointed to the most responsible offices; and it may be regarded by Churchmen as expressing the views of Methodists generally. The writer at least is not aware of any Methodist who differs on any main point from the views that are here indicated. There are points of detail, perhaps, on which differences of opinion might be found, or as to which some Methodists have not so far inquired and examined as to have formed an opinion. But these are only points of detail.

What is established in the pamphlet is—that, so far and so

long as Wesley was a mere English Churchman, he was among the most extreme of High-Churchmen—was, in truth, an intolerant and ritualising High-Churchman; that, to whatever extent, prior to 1738, being then thirty-five years old, he had deviated from High-Church doctrine and tendency, it was in the direction of the mystical legalism of William Law; that he was led to abandon the ground of High-Church doctrine and ritual, under Providence, through his intercourse, after leaving England for Georgia, with the “Moravian brethren,” and, in particular, by the instrumentality of Peter Böhler, a Moravian minister, whom he met with in England, on his return from Georgia, in 1738; that having, through such influences and instrumentality, been converted to the true evangelical faith, he was led by a gradual but by no means slow development of experience and opinion, to abandon in succession all the distinctive tenets of what is now understood as “high Catholic” doctrine, and, within ten years, became a very Low-Churchman, holding what were virtually Presbyterian views, only that they were held with a freer and larger liberality than is common among Presbyterians; and that he retained these views to the end of his life, that is throughout a period of very nearly half a century.

It is further shown that the ecclesiastical position and relations of modern Methodism were, in fact, determined by the action of Wesley during his lifetime; that the working principles of modern Methodism have sprung directly and legitimately from the seeds sown by Wesley in his missionary enterprises and ecclesiastical administration; that whatever has been carried out in the way of practical separation from the Church of England was deliberately initiated by Wesley himself: in a word, that the Methodist Conference has never ceased to tread in the footsteps and to follow out the maxims of the “Father and Founder” of the “Methodist Societies.” Wesley, in fact, not only pointed but paved the way to all that has since been done; and the utmost divergence of Methodism from the Church of

England at this day, is but the prolongation of a line the beginning of which was traced by Wesley's own hand. These statements may possibly startle those who only know Wesley through Southey's *Life*, or the report of Alexander Knox; but High-Churchmen and all others, who may doubt, are confidently referred to the investigation and evidence which follow.

At the same time it must, of course, be understood, that in Wesley's days, a certain proportion of Methodists, especially of the "better" classes, were, or considered themselves to be, Churchmen, and took the sacraments at Church, whereas in the present day there are scarcely any left of that sort. That is to say, if we regard their personal and individual sentiments, the Methodist people seem to have wheeled round to a position apart from the Church of England. Everybody can now see that the Methodist line is very far from being parallel to that of the Church. This however, has not been in consequence of any adoption by the Conference of an attitude, much less of principles, antagonistic or even unfriendly to the Church of England. It is the result of many causes operating upon the members of the Methodist Societies individually, not of any action or legislation of the Conference. Conference administration has always followed, has often but slowly followed, the feelings of the "people."

And it must always be remembered that, even in Wesley's days, his Societies included not a few strict Dissenters; even among his preachers there was a sprinkling of such; and, besides the strict Dissenters, there were among "the people called Methodists," multitudes, probably a majority, at least during the last thirty years of Wesley's life, who, while they had no idea of becoming political Dissenters, had an antipathy to the services of the parish church, and preferred to be "friendly at a" great "distance." Altogether the change which has taken place in the sentiments of the Methodists towards the Church of England is much less considerable than most persons suppose. Some eminent Methodists, from generation to generation—among the



rest Adam Clarke—have been very warmly attached to the Church of England, and have strongly expressed their attachment. But there has never been anything like a universal sentiment in real sympathy with theirs even among the ministers, much less among the people at large. There are still at the present day some remaining who are strong friends of the Church of England. But the general attitude of the “Connexion” is that of independence without enmity.

Wesley’s injunction to his people was to be “the friends of all, the enemies of none.” That motto is not yet forgotten. Nor did the last Conference in the least depart from Wesley’s maxim, either by its vote of thanks to the venerable Thomas Jackson for his memorable letter, or by courteously declining to take into consideration a letter, emanating from one who is equally eminent as a man of saintly character and as an able and dangerous heresiarch, the consideration of which would have been a departure from that rule of ecclesiastico-political non-interference on which the Conference has acted from the beginning.

J. H. R.

WESLEYAN TRAINING COLLEGE, WESTMINSTER,  
*September 30, 1868.*

## THE RELATIONS OF JOHN WESLEY AND OF WESLEYAN METHODISM TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

---

ONE of the very noteworthy facts of the present age is the perseverance with which attempts are made, on the part of the Church by law established in England, to bring back the Wesleyan Methodists into communion with that Church. If, indeed, there was any possibility of such an attempt succeeding, nothing would be more natural than that it should be made. But the peculiarity of this case is, that there is no such possibility; that the reasons which prove the impossibility are clear, and absolutely decisive; that these reasons have been again and again set forth by the literary and connexional organs of Wesleyan Methodism, and by individual writers of eminence and authority; and that the overtures and attempts on the part of the Established Church appear to have been made without any encouragement whatever from the expressed sentiments of any known Wesleyan, whether in speaking or in writing. It is yet more remarkable that in the letters, the pamphlets, and the discussions in Convocation, relating to this subject, the question is never raised as to how the Wesleyans have received former overtures, or whether their authorities have ever pronounced upon this subject of reunion with the Church of England. It seems as if this were a point not worth inquiring about. The *Wesleyan Magazine*, the *London Quarterly Review*, the *Watchman* newspaper, have repeatedly, during the last dozen years, discussed this subject in detail with complete frankness, with an explicitness and fulness which could leave no doubt on any point; but all this is ignored. The venerable Thomas Jackson, a Methodist of the elder school, is not less explicit in his pamphlet, *Why are You a Wesleyan Methodist?* than the Rev. W. Arthur was twelve

years ago in the pages of the same *Quarterly Review* to which I have just referred, in denying, with ample reasons assigned, that there can be for the Church of England any place for repentance in regard to its rejection of Methodism from its borders, or for Methodism itself any possibility of organic union with the Church of England. And yet Lord Lyttelton and Mr. Venables last autumn at Wolverhampton, like Earl Nelson the year before at York, could commit themselves to the publication of their vague crudities on this subject before the Church Congress, without having (as it is evident) been at the pains to make any research at all respecting the views of Methodists themselves upon the matters involved. It would seem as if every Churchman regarded it as a thing of course, that, if the Church to which he belongs can but show the way to attach Methodism to itself as a privileged dependency, Methodism will only be too happy to be absorbed. The leading ministers, it seems to be imagined, would feel it to be a wonderful elevation and consolation to themselves, if the hands of such dignitaries as the Bishop of Exeter or of Salisbury, of St. David's or of London, could be laid on their heads; the ministerial commonalty would be content to abdicate their pastoral character, and subside into preaching laymen—constituting a kind of subdiaconate—provided only that the hope of attaining to ordination might rise before them in the distance; the people, like sequacious sheep, would *en masse* humbly follow their preachers into the Anglican fold; trustees would make no question or scruple about the deeds by which the chapels are secured to the Wesleyan Connexion, and for the ministrations of Wesleyan itinerant preachers; the Methodism of England would be more than content, for the sake of union with the territorial and decorated Church of the Queen and Parliament, to sever itself from union and communion with the Methodism of all countries besides, and thus to mar the integrity of the greatest sisterhood of evangelical churches which the world has known; nay, would be ready to isolate itself, as the Church of England is isolated, from the entire family of Reformed Christian churches; and Parliament would be forward to dispose of all legal difficulties, and to ease the way to the recommunication and absorption desired.

All this, I repeat, is very surprising, and, on the whole, by no

means flattering to the self-respect of the Wesleyan Connexion. It is as if a fashionable gentleman of noble family and extensive property had again and again sought the hand of a lady of middle rank and of country breeding, but of good looks and good property, and notwithstanding repeated and most decisive refusals, still persisted in his overtures with bland assumption, as if no denial had been given to his suit, or rather continued to write letters of inquiry as to the time, the place, and all other arrangements for the marriage, as though his rejection by the lady were a thing inconceivable, as if her refusal of such a personage as himself had been a mere ignorant mistake which could never be allowed to stand.

I recommend Churchmen in general, who feel any interest in this subject, for their own sakes, to procure Mr. Jackson's and Mr. Arthur's excellent publications, of which the titles will be found in the Appendix at the end of this pamphlet. I am particularly glad that Mr. Arthur is republishing, in a separate form, the admirable article which he wrote twelve years ago, with some additions of great value, by which it is adapted to the present time. I may also be allowed to quote here, for the sake of Churchmen, my own deliberate testimony, printed two years ago in a volume entitled *Essays for the Times*. "I have no hesitation," I then said, "in saying that there is not the remotest possibility of the Wesleyan Methodist Church ever being absorbed in the Church of England. And I doubt whether out of the many hundreds of Wesleyan ministers, and of the hundreds of thousands of Wesleyan communicants, there are altogether a score of persons who would not smile with supreme amusement if such a proposal were presented to them."<sup>\*</sup>

Let me not be misunderstood. Neither myself, nor any of the authorities to whom I have referred, must be supposed to be indifferant to the question of Christian union. If the proposal were in very deed one for drawing close the bonds of union between Christians of all denominations, or for establishing, as the Dean of Canterbury seeks to establish, intercommunion on equal and fraternal terms between the Church of England and Nonconformist churches, the Wesleyan Church included, all that might be done in favour of it would be gladly done by such men as Mr. Jackson and Mr. Arthur, and, I hope I may add, by myself.

<sup>\*</sup> *Essays, &c.* pp. 1, 2. See also a very powerful paper in the *Wesleyan Magazine* for June, 1856.

## 12 *Difference between Absorption and Christian Union.*

---

But what is talked of in Church Congress or Convocation, what is suggested by such clergymen as Earl Nelson, Mr. Venables, the Hon. Mr. Lyttelton, and Mr. Medd, and by such laymen as Lord Lyttelton, is not any union of churches, as such, or any fraternal recognition or intercommunion between the Episcopalian clergy and the pastors of Wesleyan or other Non-conformist churches, or anything, in a word, which would imply an acknowledgment of non-episcopal denominations as true Christian churches, or Nonconformist ministers as true ministers of Christ, but merely the reabsorption of the denominations into the Established Church, by the submission of their clergy to pass under the yoke of ecclesiastical dependence, and by the subordination of all the rules and privileges of the denominations to the clerical assumptions and prerogatives of the Episcopalian theory. The bearing of the advocates of what is called reunion towards the Greek Church is most deferential, not to say obsequious; in this case what is contemplated is a real reunion of churches on terms of honour and equality for both parties, and without disbanding or subordination on the part of either. The proposals on the part of the Church of England in regard to Wesleyan Methodism, which have from time to time been brought forward, are altogether of a different character. If Wesleyans accordingly regard them with an interest which, although not unkindly, is rather critical than cordial or grateful, they must not on that account be condemned as indifferent to the question of Christian union. None long for such union more ardently than they—perhaps none are so favourably situated for realising it; if only the obstacles which arise from error and misconception as to the principles and feelings of the Methodist ministers and people can be removed.

That such obstacles should be removed is, however, of the highest importance. At present Wesleyans are apt to feel themselves affronted by the condescending overtures of Churchmen. When the latter intimate their hopes of a closer union with Wesleyans, Wesleyans themselves understand that the dissolution of their church-existence is held in view; and Wesleyan ministers who use any expression of friendly regard towards the Church of England, or even towards particular efforts and undertakings connected with that Church, are liable to be annoyed and



humiliated by finding their friendliness construed into a willingness to see the way made open for their return into the "bosom of the Establishment." I have undertaken the discussion, at this time, of the question of reunion, or absorption, as it respects Wesleyans in particular, in the hope that I may set it at rest by a fundamental investigation, and to show that the aims and hopes of the well-meaning men who are perpetually raising it, rest upon a tissue of fallacies and illusions.

Why do Churchmen perpetually single out Wesleyan Methodism from among the denominations as the one to be absorbed? Its mass and unity, no doubt, attract their admiration. Congregational churches could only be annexed one by one; Congregational pastors would hardly be likely to go over in a mass. But Methodism acts collectively: and, if it could be imagined that the body as a whole, under the leading of the Conference, could be brought back into the Church of England, of course the gain would be immense, especially in these times of schism and distraction within that Church. But might it not naturally occur to Churchmen that the vaster the system, the more highly organised in its unity, the more complete in its manifold integrity, the more massive in the bulk of property which it holds, the more multitudinous in its aggregate of churches and congregations, so much the more improbable it must be that it could ever be brought to consent, as a whole, to be reduced by absorption, to the condition of a mere dependency within a church, with its pastors degraded to the rank of subdeacons, and its free, various, and independent life suppressed within the limits of a mere ecclesiastical order, privileged in its irregularity, but inferior and subordinate, subject to episcopal control, and adjusted in some way to the framework of the Established Church, with its antique and unyielding system of prescription and stereotype?

In 1856, indeed, the self-constituted committee for promoting the absorption of Methodism into the Church of England took encouragement from the fact that Methodists have never professed themselves Dissenters; and it is likely that the same consideration has still some weight with Churchmen. The reasons, however, for the intermediate position occupied by Methodism are sufficiently plain. Methodism did not originate in any active

dissent, and does not now require of its members, or even its ministers, any profession of dissent from the Church of England. It grew into a separate body, almost unconsciously, and very reluctantly, by a process of separate development, the steps of which we shall presently enumerate. Neither does Methodism understand that it is any part of its duty to profess any polemic principle, or to assume any offensive or critical position in regard to the Establishment, or any other Christian communion. In the eye of the law the Methodists may be regarded as Dissenters; but they raise, as Methodists, no question of political relation, or of ritual or doctrine, as regards the Church by law established. A day may come when the connection between Church and State in this country will be at an end. The designation "Dissenters" will then be out of date and out of place—(there are no Dissenters in America)—but the positive principles of Wesleyan Methodism will still remain.

It is a fact, indeed, that, some years ago, a distinguished Methodist minister gave evidence before a Committee of the House of Lords in favour of Church-rates, and incidentally also in support of the Church of England, as an eminently valuable religious and political institution. But it must be remembered that that evidence was given on personal responsibility, and was not endorsed by the Conference. I have elsewhere set down my own assurance, that "undoubtedly the great majority of Wesleyans are passively opposed to Church-rates; they heartily dislike them, although few of them may have joined in any agitation against them."\* And in an able and temperate paper published in the *Wesleyan Magazine* for April last, and understood to be from the pen of the distinguished minister to whom I have referred, which deals with the very subject of "The Union of the Methodists with the Church of England," I find the following passage:—

"We hope it now appears that in every point of view these proposals for union are impracticable, ill-considered, and inexpedient. If those who make them would expend their time and talent in maintaining the Protestant character of the Established Church, they would do far more (though indirectly) towards accomplishing their object than by any such overtures as we

---

\* *Essays, &c.* p. 7.

have lately heard of. They would conciliate the feelings of many now grieved, beyond expression, at the unfaithfulness of those who claim to be the only authorised guides and instructors of the English people. Another method of usefulness in the same direction, is open to them. They may, in their several neighbourhoods, treat their Methodist neighbours with gentleness and consideration, and respect their legal rights and liberties. Many of the clergy appear to think a Methodist preacher a being almost beneath notice, and debarred from the courtesies of society. Union in a smaller sphere they do not contemplate, though they talk about it on a large scale. Wisdom, however, would reverse this course of proceeding, and proceed from less to more. Nothing is lost by civility; something may be gained by it."—P. 334.

There can be no greater mistake, indeed, than to suppose that there is, or ever has been, at least in the present generation, any party within Methodism, whether of ministers or among the people, who have felt the slightest concern as to union with the Church of England. Such a union has been regarded as simply out of the question. There has never been within my knowledge the faintest movement in its favour. It was a complaint of Mr. Crowther, in 1795, that the "children of Methodists, alas, too seldom grow up Methodists." It is not an uncommon complaint of Methodists to-day that their children, when they grow up, migrate into the Church of England. On the whole, however, the attachment of Methodists to their own denomination is firmer now than at any former period. And, so far as I am able to judge, the number of young persons brought up among the Congregationalist Nonconformists, who pass across into the ranks of the more fashionable and ecclesiastically open and undisciplined State Church, is larger than of the children of Methodists. So, also, the number of ministers now in the Church of England who received their early training (in some instances as ministerial candidates) in the ranks of Congregational Dissent, is probably larger in proportion than of those who passed their early years in Methodism. And it is unquestionable that more ministers of mature age and respectable position pass over to the Church of England from the Independents and Baptists than from the Methodists. The Rev. George Venables, in his paper on Nonconformists and the Church, read before the Church Congress of 1867, speaks, in a series of notes, of a "Dissenter of high position,

who wishes to conform," to whom he is indebted for "courteous letters" on the subject; of a "Nonconformist of position and ability," to whom he had written, and "who would join the Communion of the Church at once, but by no means alone, if one or two suggested explanations were given;" of a "Nonconformist minister," with whom he has been in correspondence, "who desires to cease his Nonconformity, if only some fair opportunity were given him by the Church;" of "a very eminent Dissenting minister" (now deceased), who "told him that if he had his time over again, he would be ordained in the Church of England." This minister, it may be probably inferred from an allusion on a foregoing page of Mr. Venables' paper, was the late Rev. John Clayton; and Mr. Venables professes to be "rather intimately acquainted with Dissent (though never connected with it), and to have been at one time well known to a few of its eminent ministers." Now it is to be noted that we never hear of such confidential communications as these having been made by Wesleyan ministers to clergymen of the Church of England.

Apart, indeed, from the political questions involved in the connection of Church and State, I have no doubt that it is much harder, in general, to transmute a Methodist into an Episcopalian than a "Protestant Dissenter" who has a taste for chanting. I may repeat here what I have said elsewhere, "Methodism means close and lively Christian fellowship—class-meetings and prayer-meetings. These are not to be had in the Church of England. . . . Methodism is not approaching nearer to the Church of England. No real Methodist could ever find himself content and at home in the stately but cold cloisters of the Anglican Church. Methodists much prefer their own sanctuary, which, though it be less and lowlier, has in it much more of the life and joy and fellowship which befit the communion of saints."\*

I imagine, however, that that which most powerfully influences clergymen in their advances upon the Methodist Church is the consideration that John Wesley, till his death, considered himself as belonging to the Church of which he was ordained a minister, and wished and urged his people, as far as possible, to attend her

---

\* *Essays for the Times*, pp. 10, 11.

services and take part in her communion. It is hence inferred that Methodists ought to be members of the Church of England, if they duly revere their Founder's memory and precepts, and that there can be no insuperable difficulty in effecting their return. The inference indeed is eminently rash. The Methodists were forced by circumstances to widen the separation, already in reality organic and radical, although in appearance not very considerable, which, sorely against his will, Wesley had been obliged to make between his societies and the Church of England. Half a century ago, this separation may be said to have become almost universal and complete, and fifty years of growth since that time must needs have built up a system which cannot now be folded back within the precincts of the Church of England. "New bottles" have been provided for the "new wine;" to attempt to pour it back into the "old bottles" would be insanity. Still the fallacy I have spoken of does prevail. Mr. Wesley's principles and conduct, and the relations of Methodism to the Church of England during the later years of Wesley, are altogether misunderstood. And the chief object of this publication will be to dispose, once and for all, of the assumptions and illusions of clergymen on this subject.

The most effective of the tracts by which clergymen in town and (especially) in country try to seduce Wesleyan Methodists from their allegiance to the Church in which they have been brought up, is one of the smallest, and is altogether the least original and most unpretending. It is entitled, *Pastoral Advice of the Rev. John Wesley*, and consists of a series of extracts, detached from their context, culled from Wesley's writings. No passage which could well be pressed into the service of the compiler has been neglected. The search has been thorough, for whatever looked like devotion to the Church of England, or could be construed into a commendation of her claims to his people. How highly this tract is esteemed by those clergymen who make it their business to unsettle the minds of Wesleyans, may be inferred from the fact that the copy before me is advertised as one of the "sixteenth thousand." I will therefore, in the first instance, look in the face all that this tract brings forward. I shall then be sure that I have before me the strength of the case on behalf of the Anglicans who speak so urgently to Wesleyans



of the propriety, not to say the imperative duty, of their return within the fold of the Established Church.

I cannot afford space to print at length all the passages quoted in this tract, which can be obtained of Messrs. Masters for a penny, but I shall give the tract-writer's summing up from the whole evidence. The following, then, is his *Analysis of Wesley's Pastoral Advice* :—

“The Rev. John Wesley was a Churchman from conviction (No. 36), felt it his duty to remain in the Church (No. 4), and frequently expressed his determination to do so (Nos. 12, 39, 51, 52, 56).

“Charged the Methodists not to leave the Church (Nos. 3, 9, 31, 34, 47, 56), even though they thought their minister's life or doctrine was bad (Nos. 14, 19, 20).

“Loved the Church service, and preferred it to all others (Nos. 29, 37); observed the Feasts (No. 55) and Fasts (No. 38).

“Attended Church (Nos. 28, 30, 34, 38), even when he expected an unedifying sermon (No. 28), and read the Church Service before preaching.

“Required the Society to attend Church constantly, and to receive the Holy Communion there (Nos. 1, 5, 17, 25), and urged them to do so, even if they do not esteem their minister (Nos. 14, 20, 45).

“Spoke from his own experience (No. 6) and that of another (No. 7) of the great blessing obtained in going to Church, and described the loss which he said some persons had sustained by not doing so (No. 23).

“Would not let the Methodists hold their meetings in Church hours, as he CONSIDERED THAT THIS WOULD BE ‘A FORMAL SEPARATION FROM THE CHURCH’ (Nos. 41, 43), showed how experience proved that the adoption of this course would not benefit the Society (No. 44), enforced his rule on this point as strictly as he could (No. 49), and was careful to follow it himself (Nos. 34, 50).

“Knew the sin of Dissent (No. 21): on principle refused to go to Dissenting meetings (Nos. 11, 25), or allow the Methodists to go to them (Nos. 17, 25, 49).

“Lost some members of his Society by his strict rules with regard to the Church Service (Nos. 11, 27).

“Disowned those who separated from the Church, as having been influenced by Dissenters, and having no connection with him (No. 33), and implied that, for the most part, they had not been regular members of his Society (No. 31).

“Complained that these ‘seceders and mongrel Methodists’ did not help, but rather impeded his work (Nos. 15, 24).

“Traced the failure of Methodism in some places to disloyalty

to the Church (Nos. 26, 42), and its success in other places to the adherence of the members to it (Nos. 16, 53).

"Deciared that if his preachers administered the Sacraments, THEY WOULD BY THAT ACT RECENT THEIR CONNECTION WITH METHODISM, and commit the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (No. 48).

"Took steps to prevent separation from the Church (Title-page, Nos. 8, 10, 13, 18, 49).

"Reported the decisions of eight 'Conferences' in favour of continuing in the Church (Nos. 12, 14, 32, 35, 40, 46, 53, 54), and with regard to each of them said, or implied, that the decision was unanimous.

"When he was dying, and just before he 'changed for death,' expressed strongly his wish that no change should be made in the condition of affairs; and in almost his last words, prayed for God's blessing on the Church (No. 57)."

No doubt—to begin with the beginning in reviewing this *Analysis*—no doubt, "Wesley was a Churchman from conviction, felt it to be his duty to remain in the Church, and frequently expressed his determination to do so." All the world knows this. No doubt, also, he did at different times, "charge the Methodists not to leave the Church, even though they thought their minister's life or doctrine was bad." But Wesley was an eminently candid man. He was strongly attached to the Church of England;\* but he did not love even the Church of England more than he loved souls and the cause of God. And when glaring and extreme cases came to his knowledge, he found himself unable to maintain his injunction that his people were still to go to Church, even although the minister's life or doctrine might be bad. He was obliged to admit exceptions; and as his "churches" multiplied (he himself spoke of his "societies")

---

\* Wesley's Churchmanship during fifty years of his life amounted to this: he loved the Liturgy, he believed the doctrine of the Homilies, he desired his people, so far as they could do so, with a good conscience, to follow his own example in attending Church service and taking the Sacrament at church, except where he himself had, for special reasons, established or allowed Church service in his own preaching-houses during Church hours, and the administration of the Sacraments by himself or his brother or by their ordained coadjutors, some of whom were clergymen of the Church of England, while others were ordained by himself. But he never made attendance at Church a condition of membership in his own societies. Many Dissenters joined his societies; these both he and his brother Charles were accustomed to advise to go to the Dissenting meeting, unless the doctrine preached there was altogether Antinomian. The Methodist services were usually at hours which did not interfere with attendance at the ordinary worship, either at church or meeting.



frequently and interchangeably as "churches"), he found himself compelled to admit of more and more numerous exceptions, until at length, to meet the case of these exceptions, he was forced to ordain ministers, from among his own preachers, to administer the Sacraments in the preaching-rooms. Let me quote two passages in illustration of what I have now said. He writes to his brother Charles—"Joseph Cownley says, 'For such and such reasons I dare not hear a drunkard preach or read prayers.' I answer, I dare. But I cannot answer his reasons." And again, "The last time I was at Scarboro' I earnestly exhorted our people to go to Church; and I went myself. But the wretched minister preached such a sermon, that I could not in conscience advise them to hear him any more."\* That is to say, Wesley's theory of conformity broke down under the weight of facts. It was in 1787, four years before his death, that, assisted by Messrs. Creighton and Dickenson, presbyters of the Church of England, he set apart three of his preachers, Messrs. Mather, Rankin, and Moore, to administer the Sacraments to some of the "societies" in England. And, for nearly fifty years before his death, not only his brother and himself, but the best of his preachers, in due course and order of appointment, on the itinerant plan, had constantly read prayers and preached *during Church hours*, to the congregations gathered in the Methodist preaching-rooms or meeting-houses at London and Bristol, in which *preaching-houses* also he and his brother had continually administered the Sacraments. It is true that what led to this complete and really organic separation between Methodism and the Church of England, from so early a period, in London and Bristol, was that the clergy drove away the brothers and their people from the Lord's Table.† Not the less, however, the result was a complete, however involuntary, separation of Methodism from the Church of England in these two mother churches of Methodism, from which separation it was to be expected that in due time a general separation of Methodism from the Established Church would follow.

The third and fourth sentences of the *Analysis* contain nothing which calls for remark; they could hardly be weaker. As to the

---

\* *Works*, vol. xii. pp. 109, 144.

† Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. i. p. 231.

fifth, it must be remembered that until Wesley had ordained preachers to administer the Sacraments, his people had no choice but to take the Sacrament at Church, or else to live in neglect of Christ's holy ordinance. Wesley held that all Christian people were bound to take the Lord's Supper. He could very rarely be present in any given place, especially country places, to administer it himself. His itinerant preachers, at the first, were many of them men of little or no education, who would have shrunk from such a work as that of administering the Lord's Supper; and besides, even these visited the places but seldom in the course of their flying circuits, and scarcely ever were at the minor stations on the Lord's Day, their lack of preaching service, in the intervals between their visits, being supplied by the service of the local preachers. Of necessity, therefore, in most places which he visited, Wesley could not but insist that his people, as Christian believers, should repair to the parish church to receive the Lord's Supper. It must not be forgotten, however—and indeed it is an important element in the case—that they were often cruelly and contemptuously driven away.\*

The next sentence of the *Analysis* may pass without comment. And the one which follows is only an evidence of the inconsistency between Mr. Wesley's predilections and the conclusions which his judgment forced upon him. He presumes, truly, that for Methodists to hold their meetings in Church hours is "a formal separation from the Church;" he was most reluctant to sanction any such arrangement. Yet he had, in fact, allowed such arrangements to be made, in the very instances referred to in the *Analysis*, and about which he is disturbed and grieved. And these instances themselves had arisen as a direct consequence of the system of separate services in Church hours, which he had so long maintained in the mother churches of Methodism. Brentford and Deptford had but insisted on being allowed to follow the example of City-road.

As for Wesley's "knowing the sin of Dissent," the sentence which so affirms is a pure and a very inexcusable misrepresentation. At Bradford, in 1761, Wesley "found an Anabaptist teacher had perplexed and unsettled the minds of several."† Does it

---

\* Jackson's *Charles Wesley*, i. 231: *Wesley's Works*, i. 383, 384.

† *Journal*, July 15th, 1761. *Works*, iii. 64.

follow from this, or from the phrase about "Satan's devices," that Wesley regarded Dissent as a sin? There is no foundation whatever for such a wretched imputation; there is abundant evidence to the contrary. In Georgia, indeed, and for a year or two after his return to England, Wesley did regard Dissent as a sin. But for many years he had lived far above such bigotry as this. It is true, to be sure, as he tells us, that he never went to a Dissenting meeting. This was his rule, as a point of expediency. He did not wish to give any avoidable cause for suspicion or offence. Moreover he could not bear the Calvinistic doctrine, or the bald service, or the slow singing of the meeting house. So that his tastes and sympathies combined with his prudence to keep him from the Dissenting place of worship. But, as to any point of ecclesiastical principle, Wesley was, for the best part of his life, rather agreed with the Nonconformists of the seventeenth century than with the Erastian and intolerant Episcopalianism which dictated the Acts of 1662. He traced the gross and rapid corruption of the Early Church to the establishment of Christianity by Constantine as the State religion of the Roman empire;\* and he regarded the Puritans and Nonconformists of England as the "real Christians" of their age: as "venerable men," who were "driven out" of the Church by persecutors, many of whom, including even the "Protestant bishops," "had neither more religion nor humanity than the Popish bishops of Queen Mary."† But he may be forgiven if he had no great admiration for the meeting-house Dissent which he met with in England a century ago. In a few remote country towns and villages that hard and narrow sort may still be found; and there are very few now-a-days who love it or admire it very warmly. It will serve to show how far and why Wesley had a distaste for Dissent, and at the same time how altogether untrue is the statement that he regarded it as a "sin," if I quote the following passages from his tract, entitled, *Reasons Against the Separation from the Church of England*:—

---

\* *Works*, vi. 246, 291, 292; vii. 25, 156, 264.

† I have written at some length on this subject in my *Essays for the Times*, pp. 128—133. On the top of p. 133, however, occurs an error in regard to Charles Wesley. It was not his brother John Wesley, but his friend John Nelson, to whom Charles Wesley wrote that he would rather see him "smiling in his coffin" than "a Dissenting minister."

“(2.) Might it not be another (at least, prudential) rule for every Methodist preacher, not to frequent any Dissenting meeting? (Though we blame none who have been always accustomed to it.) But if we do this, certainly our people will. Now this is actually separating from the Church. If, therefore, it is (at least) not expedient to separate, neither is this expedient. Indeed, we may attend our assemblies, and the Church too; because they are at different hours. But we cannot attend both the meeting and the Church, because they are at the same hours.

“If it be said, ‘But at the Church we are fed with chaff, whereas, at the meeting we have wholesome food;’ we answer, (i.) The prayers of the Church are not chaff; they are substantial food for any who are alive to God. (ii.) The Lord’s Supper is not chaff, but pure and wholesome for all who receive it with upright hearts. Yea, (iii.) In almost all the sermons we hear there, we hear many great and important truths: and whoever has a spiritual discernment, may easily separate the chaff from the wheat therein. (iv.) How little is the case mended at the meeting! Either the teachers are ‘new light’ men, denying the Lord that bought them, and overturning His Gospel from the very foundations; or they are Predestinarians, and so preach predestination and final perseverance, more or less. Now, whatever this may be to them who were educated therein, yet to those of our brethren who have lately embraced it, repeated experience shows it is not wholesome food; rather to them it has the effect of deadly poison. In a short time it destroys all their zeal for God. They grow fond of opinions, and strife of words; they despise self-denial and the daily cross; and, to complete all, wholly separate from their brethren.

“(3.) Nor is it expedient for any Methodist preacher to imitate the Dissenters in their manner of praying; either in his tone—all particular tones both in prayer and preaching should be avoided with the utmost care; or in his language—all his words should be plain and simple, such as the lowest of his hearers both use and understand; or in the length of his prayer, which should not usually exceed four or five minutes,\* either before or after sermon. One might add, neither should we sing like them, in a slow, drawling manner; we sing swift, both because it saves time, and because it tends to awake and enliven the soul.”—*Works*, vol. xiii. pp. 217, 218.

In what spirit Wesley dealt with Dissenters when he found them among his own societies will be seen from a passage in his *Journal*, under date, Sunday, March 18, 1759. “I administered

---

\* The congregation were expected to attend prayers and service at Church. Hence “four or five minutes” would be enough.

the Lord's Supper to near two hundred communicants. . . . As a considerable part of them were Dissenters, I desired every one to use what position he judged best. Had I required them to kneel, probably half would have sat. Now all but one kneeled down." \*

Many Methodists had been brought up Dissenters; many, after joining the Methodist Society, did not cease to be Dissenters. Not even Charles Wesley regarded such as being guilty of schism, or sin, because they were Dissenters. He was convinced that for *him* it would be a sin to leave the Church of England, but in visiting the societies he did not attempt to interfere with the convictions of those who were Dissenters. He says in his Journal, under date, October 31, 1756, "The Dissenters I sent to their respective meetings." † This was on Sunday morning.

So unfounded is the statement that Wesley regarded Dissent as "sin." Indeed, when it is remembered that Wesley was the friend and correspondent of Doddridge, that he visited him at Northampton, and expounded in his family, even so early as 1745, it will at once be felt how impossible it was that Wesley should regard Dissent as "sin," after he had learnt the large liberality which so eminently characterised his maturer years.

In 1745 some considerable remnants of High-Church prejudice still clung to Wesley. Nevertheless his candour had already learnt and unlearnt much. In that year he wrote his *Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, one of his most able and eloquent productions. In one part of that appeal he turns to Dissenters, and thus he writes:—

"I begin with those who are at the smallest distance from us, whether they are termed Presbyterians or Independents, of whom in general I cannot but have a widely different opinion from that I entertained some years ago, as having since then conversed with many among them 'in whom the root of the matter' is undeniably found, and who labour to keep a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward men."—*Wesley's Works*, vol. viii. pp. 174, 175.

More than thirty years later (in 1777) he appeals again to

---

\* *Works*, ii. 446.

† Jackson's *Charles Wesley*, ii. 128.



Dissenters, in regard to the loyalty which, amid the excitement of the American war, they owed to their king. The style of his appeal is very significant, and illustrates what has been already intimated respecting his sentiments on the Puritan controversy.

"Do you imagine there are no High-Churchmen left? Did they all die with Dr. Sacheverell? Alas, how little do you know of mankind! Were the present restraint taken off, you would see them swarming on every side, and gnashing upon you with their teeth . . . If other Bonners and Gardiners did not arise, other Lauds and Sheldons would, who would either rule over you with a rod of iron, or drive you out of the land."—*Wesley's Works*, vol. xi. pp. 132, 133.

These are not the words of one who regarded Dissent as "sin." Wesley had left all such puerile bigotry far behind him; he had "become a man" and had "put away childish things."

I pass over the next sentence of the *Analysis* as amounting to nothing. And in regard to the one which follows, all that need be remarked is that, in the passages referred to, Wesley is distinguishing between himself with his own people, the *Wesleyan* Methodists, and such other Methodists, generally so called, as, like Ingham and Whitfield, and like Maxfield, who had seceded from his own Society, were Dissenters in principle. His object is to show, that, if those other Methodists opposed and denounced the Church, often with bitterness and violence of language, his own people must not be confounded with them, nor he and they held to be, in violation of his principles and professions, antagonists of the Church. All this amounts to nothing more than all the world knows. What has now been said explains the sentence which follows in the *Analysis*. As to the next sentence, there can be no doubt that a spirit of hostility and bitterness towards the Church of England was very likely to cause the failure of Methodism in many places; although, at the same time, in other places, its success, as the *Analysis* and the extracts on which it is founded show, was hindered by the too strict adherence of Wesley and his preachers to the Church of England.

Of the remaining sentences in the *Analysis* none has any real significance, except that which refers to the famous "Korah, Dathan, and Abiram" sermon preached by Wesley less than

two years before his death. Wesley's faculties were then at length beginning to fail, as is admitted by himself in some measure, and was much more evident to those about him. The failure of eye and hand did but indicate the decay which at last had begun to tell upon the intellectual energies of the wonderful old man. It was no marvel that some of his early predilections came back to him with passionate force. His sympathy and his taste had always attached him to the Church of England; Anglican Oxford was his *alma mater*, where he had spent, in his warm and tender adolescence and his early manhood, fifteen consecrated years; and now his calm firm judgment was enfeebled. Mr. Jonathan Crowther in his *Crisis of Methodism* intimates that he became more peremptory in his latest years. Moreover, he was indulging in a happy, sanguine dream. He had for some years been courted and tended by many Churchmen with wondering reverence. Laity and even clergy flocked to see and hear him. He was one of the greatest wonders of the age. Popular contempt, and the frown of dignitaries, had long passed away. Crowds thronged to ask his blessing. Magistrates and gentry vied in their attentions to him. Accomplished, thorough Churchmen, like Mr. Alexander Knox, welcomed him to their homes. Churches were now at length open to him again; and when he gave the Sacrament, many clergymen pressed forward to assist in administering to the crowds that came to partake.\* Wesley would have been more than human if this had not told upon him. He began to hope that some way might possibly be found, even after he had gone, for bringing the Methodist churches within the unity of the Church of England. He determined, if his strongest tones of authority might do it, to stay the movement among his preachers in favour of their general ordination. It was not, indeed, to be stayed. There was no reason why Mr. Moore should be ordained, and Mr. Bradburn or Mr. Thompson should not. But yet Wesley would make the attempt. Hence this sermon, in which Methodist preachers are compared to the Old Testament "prophets," and defined to be "Evangelists," in the New Testament sense, but are warned not to aspire after the "priest's" office, lest they

---

\* *Works*, iv. 374, 393.



should make themselves like to Korah and his fellows. Let us, however, not forget the note which is added to this sermon by Mr. Jackson in his edition of Wesley's Works, and which is taken from Moore's *Life of Wesley*.

"Respecting this sermon, the following information is given by Mr. Moore in his *Life of Mr. Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 339:—'I was with Mr. Wesley in London when he published that sermon. He had encouraged me to be a man of *one book*; and he had repeatedly invited me to speak fully whatever objection I had to anything which he spoke or published. I thought that some things in that discourse were not to be found in *THE BOOK*; and I resolved to tell him so, the first opportunity. It soon occurred. I respectfully observed that I agreed with him that the Lord had always sent by whom He would send, instruction, reproof, and correction in righteousness, to mankind; and that there was a real distinction between the prophetic and priestly office in the Old Testament, and the prophetic and pastoral office in the New (where no priesthood is mentioned but that of our Lord); but I could not think that what he said concerning the Evangelists and the Pastors, or Bishops, was agreeable to what we read there, viz. that the latter had a right to administer the sacraments, which the former did not possess. I observed, 'Sir, you know the *Evangelists* Timothy and Titus were ordered by the Apostles to ordain *Bishops* in every place; and surely they could not impart to them an authority which they did not themselves possess.' He looked earnestly at me for some time, but not with displeasure. He made no reply, and soon introduced another subject. I said no more. The man of *one book* could not dispute against it. I believe he saw his love to the Church, from which he never deviated unnecessarily, had in this instance led him a little too far.'—*Wesley's Works*, vol. vii. pp. 261, 262.

I may now leave the *Analysis*. But it is impossible to understand truly the question of Wesley and the Church of England, or of Methodism and the Church of England at the present day, unless the principles which actuated Wesley throughout his course are definitely apprehended, and the beautiful and noble development of his opinions and views is clearly followed. It is easy to prove that Wesley was substantially consistent with himself, though certainly not with what he had been as a High-Churchman, in his whole conduct as the founder of Methodism, from the time when he began to preach the doctrine of justification by faith; and that it was his adoption of that doctrine and its correlatives which compelled him to abandon his dearly-

beloved ground of High-Church Ritualism and exclusiveness, and to become the head of a religious community founded and organised upon the opposite principles of free religious life, of brotherly fellowship, and of sanctification by means of the truth. All Wesley's variations and irregularities as a Churchman, fundamental and numberless as these were, were forced upon him by the necessities of the great mission work in which he had been constrained to engage. If Wesley had submitted to be a regular and tractable Churchman, that work must have been arrested and broken up. And after Wesley's death the Methodist Conference walked most strictly in their Founder's steps; they separated no farther than they were compelled; they suffered the peace of the Connexion to be most seriously embroiled, and allowed many of their churches to be brought to the verge of dissolution, before they consented to permit even the gradual extension of separate services in Church hours, and of sacramental administrations by their own preachers for the members of their societies. In giving this guarded permission they still did but follow the precedent of Wesley, and act in conformity with his spirit and principles. They never, at any time, decreed a separation of Methodism from the Church of England; that separation was effected by the Society's members distributively and individually, not at all on the suggestion, or in any way by the action or authority, of Conference. The Wesleyan Conference did not, in fact, recognise and provide for the actual condition of ecclesiastical independency into which the Connexion had been brought until that condition had long existed: and Methodist preachers abstained from using the style and title appropriate to ordained ministers, or from assuming in any way, collectively, the language of complete pastoral responsibility, until, by the universal action of the Connexion, their people had, of their own will, separated themselves from the Church of England, and forced their preachers into the full position and relations of pastors—pastors in common of a common flock, who recognised them alone as their pastors, and amongst whom they itinerated by mutual arrangement. When all this is borne in mind, and when it is also remembered, that the bishops and most of the clergy repelled, or at least declined, the overtures of the Methodists from the first; that some of them, as we have

seen, insulted and drove away from the Lord's Table, and sometimes even from their churches, both preachers and people, not excepting the Wesleys themselves; that no such efforts as now, a century too late, are imagined and projected for including Methodism with its itinerancy, and its living energy, within the pale of the Church of England, were made during Wesley's life, or were for a moment entertained, although they would have precisely coincided with Wesley's views: it will then be understood how ignorant as well as how unjust a thing it is, how childish, as well as narrow and bigoted, it must appear to Wesleyans, to argue that, as true followers of John Wesley, the Methodists of to-day are bound to return to the Established Church. Such arguments can only excite the wonder and pity of manly Methodists. They may have influence with the feeble-minded and ill-informed, with a few dependent, depressed, and ignorant rustics, or with effeminate aspirants for a certain social recognition, which they have not character enough otherwise to obtain, but which, it is imagined, the passport of the clergy can confer; but they can never make an impression on the body and soul of Methodism.

Having now indicated the course of statement and argument by which the references of modern Churchmen to Mr. Wesley and his opinions are to be met, let me proceed to offer some historical elucidations of what I have advanced.

It is amusing to observe with what triumph a few descendants of Methodists, having themselves left their ancestral church, bring forth their discoveries of "mares' nests" wherewith to confound modern Methodists. If they had only read, with care, Southey's *Life of Wesley*, they would have more wisdom; if they had also read Richard Watson's *Life of Wesley*, there would be some hope that, in ceasing to be attached to Methodism, they might still retain the credit of being well-informed in regard to the denomination they have left. In the *Guardian* newspaper for the last week of last November there appeared a communication, containing a transcript of what seems to have been a memorandum of John Wesley. The correspondent of the *Guardian* ventures to think that this document "possesses great value and importance," and "represents John Wesley's own private opinion

on the points referred to." Its purport is that Wesley "believed it a duty to observe, so far as he could—1. To baptize by immersion. 2. To use water, oblation of elements, invocation, alms, and prothesis in the Eucharist. 3. To pray for the faithful departed. 4. To pray standing on Sunday in Pentecost. 5. To abstain from blood and things strangled." It also contains some words to the effect that he thought it right "to turn to the east at the Creed." What else there is in it is immaterial. The gentleman who sent this communication to the *Guardian* seems to imagine that it may have expressed Wesley's mature opinions; intimates, in a subsequent letter to the *Watchman*, his own notion (*opinion* it can hardly be called, the word would be too dignified) that Wesley may, even in advanced life, have been a "very High Churchman," such as the extract would imply, after the modern Ritualistic type; and thinks that it is too readily assumed that Wesley's "opinions underwent a change." The most surprising thing about this gentleman's letter to the *Watchman* is, that he who could so write and so infer, professes to have "given close attention to the life and times of Wesley." His close attention must have been limited to a very narrow range of reading.

Whether the memorandum in question is indeed Wesley's is a point not quite settled, as it bears no signature, and has altogether an intricate and doubtful, although a curious, and, when all is known (I happen to know more than the correspondent of the *Guardian* tells), an amusing history. What is certain is, that it was found soon after Wesley's death among a number of waste papers, which had come out of his house at City Road, and that the handwriting seems to be, or at least strongly resembles, that of Wesley. But if we assume it to have been Wesley's, it adds nothing material to what was before known of the Founder of Methodism. It can only belong to one well-defined period of his life; its date cannot be later than 1737; and it may probably be assigned to 1735—7.

In 1738 Wesley was thirty-five years old. He had just returned from Georgia. Three years before (in 1735) he had terminated his residence at Oxford, after a close and loving connection with it of fifteen years.

Up to 1738 Wesley was a philosophical High-Churchman;

after 1738 he became, first, an evangelical High-Churchman, and then an evangelical Low-Churchman ; that is to say, the evangelical light and life of which he had become a partaker, took out of him, first, his philosophy, and then his High-Church ritualism and bigotry. He tells us himself, writing in 1738, that "for many years he had been tossed about by various winds of doctrine." He read Thomas à Kempis's *Christian's Pattern*, and was deeply impressed by it. He read some "Lutheran and Calvinistic authors," and was perplexed by what they said respecting faith. He read Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call*, and for some years regarded that powerful writer as an oracle ; indeed, notwithstanding some letters, distinguished by a stern and somewhat rude fidelity, which he addressed to him in after-years, and notwithstanding the very serious errors, not to say heresies, into which Law advanced, Wesley seems never to have lost a sense of gratitude and respect for his early "guide, philosopher, and friend." He read Bishop Beveridge, Bishop Taylor, and Mr. Nelson, retaining still his use of Thomas à Kempis and his reverence for Law. Under the advice of Law he read *Theologia Germanica*—which has, within a few years past, been translated into English by Miss Winckworth, and published, with a preface by Professor Kingsley. Bewildered amid the variety of doctrines and opinions, he sought for a ground of unity and continuity, and a guarantee of orthodoxy, in the Church. This brought him where it has brought multitudes besides, in former times as well as lately, "to those who showed him a sure rule for interpreting the Scriptures, *consensus veterum ; quod ab omnibus, quod ubique, quod semper creditum.*" "Nor was it long," he adds, "before I bent the bow too far ; by making antiquity a co-ordinate rather than sub-ordinate rule with Scripture ; by admitting several doubtful writings ; by extending antiquity too far ; by believing more practices to have been universal in the ancient Church than ever were so ; by not considering that the decrees of a provincial synod could bind only that province, and the decrees of a general synod only those provinces whose representatives met therein ; that most of these decrees were adapted to particular times and occasions, and, consequently, when those occasions ceased, must cease to bind even those provinces." From these delusions, from this dry and



bigoted externalism, Wesley was, according to his own account, delivered, in part, by means of the mystical writers to whom he had not ceased to be addicted—such, no doubt, as Tauler, and the author of *Theologia Germanica*, and Madame de Bourignon. The “noble descriptions of union with God, and internal religion,” which his mystic authorities gave, “made everything else,” he tells us, “appear mean, and flat, and insipid.” But he found presently that they made faith and good works appear so too, giving him “a plenary dispensation from the commands of God.” From these conclusions he shrunk back horrified, and considered himself as having narrowly escaped from a ruinous gulf of heresy. Henceforth, to the end of his days, he seems to have regarded the mystics much as he regarded them at the time when he wrote (in 1738) the summary from which chiefly I have now been quoting, as “the most dangerous of all the enemies of Christianity.” Hence, the startling plainness with which he soon afterwards wrote to Law, whom he had so greatly revered.\*

It was after such a course of schooling as this that Wesley, under the influence of the Moravians, and especially of Peter Böhler, was brought to abandon at the same time his mystical philosophy and his doctrines of ritualistic sanctification, and to embrace the doctrine of justification by faith.

Wesley had been ordained in 1725; in 1730 he began to visit the gaols, prompted by Mr. Morgan, and to attend weekly communion; in 1731, on the suggestion of Mr. Clayton, he and his friends of the “Godly Club” began to observe “the fasts appointed by the Church.” After this they carried their fasting and austerities to a lamentable extreme, seeking in asceticism, “good works,” and religious services, to find rest to their souls. But it was not till Wesley left Oxford, in 1735, and went on board ship for Georgia, that his ascetic excesses and his ritualism were carried to their utmost height.

Throughout the earlier half of the period we have now under review, Wesley’s doctrine may be described as ethical philosophy limited and conditioned by the two grand postulates of dis-

---

\* Southey’s *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. pp. 110—112. Wesley’s *Works*, vol. i. pp. 92, 93.

tinatively Anglican orthodoxy—viz. that the Christian life is imparted in baptism, and that it is nourished by the consecrated elements of the Eucharistic Supper. To this period belongs the earlier portion of his curious correspondence with the fascinating and distinguished Mrs. Pendarves (afterwards Mrs. Delany),\* and some absolutely Christless sermons in MS., mere moral disquisitions, which now lie before me. During the latter portion of this period his doctrine was a strange compound of mysticism and semi-Popish asceticism; Thomas à Kempis, Law, and the Marquis de Renty, were in some way combined with the highest ritualism of the Church of England. The memorandum to which I have referred might not unfairly represent one side of Wesley's doctrine at that period. But his MS. Journals more authentically and more fully represent it. Having sole ecclesiastical responsibility in Savannah, he felt bound in conscience strictly to carry out his ascetic and ecclesiastical discipline. It is well known that the strictness of his discipline and the rigid asceticism which he not only practised himself, but endeavoured to enforce to some extent in the case of communicants, brought upon him an action at law. Among the matters alleged against him, and not denied on his part, were such as these, that he admitted none to the Holy Communion who did not make a statement to him of their religious state, and submit to his requirements as to fasting and devotion: that he repelled Dissenters, or those whom he regarded as such; that he divided the morning service on Sundays, taking the Litany between 5 and 6 A.M., and omitting the Litany and some other prayers at the forenoon service; that he dipped infants; that he admitted none to be God-parents who were not communicants. One notable instance of his bigoted and ritualistic High-Churchmanship he has himself commemorated in his printed Journal. On the principle that he could administer the Lord's Supper to none except such as had received baptism in the Episcopal Church, Wesley repelled John Martin Belzhus, a Moravian, one of the most pious men in the colony. Long afterwards he received a letter from this good man, which he published in his eighth Journal with this reflection, "What a truly

---

\* *Correspondence of Cyrus and Aspasia.* See *Wesleyan Magazine* for 1863, pp. 134, 211.



Christian piety and simplicity breathes in these lines. And yet this very man, when I was at Savannah, did I refuse to admit to the Lord's Table, 'because he was not baptized;' *i.e.* not baptized by a minister who had been episcopally ordained. Can anyone carry High-Church zeal higher than this? and how well have I since been beaten with mine own staff."<sup>\*</sup>

Such was the narrowness, the bigotry, the rigid asceticism, the ecclesiastical despotism, of Wesley in Georgia. Mr. Bennett, of Frome, is not at this day, in reality, a more determined ritualist, a more *advanced reactionary* (to use a phrase which only *sounds* paradoxical), than John Wesley was in Georgia, one hundred and thirty years ago. I repeat, High-Churchmen can discover nothing as to Wesley's High-Churchmanship in these times which can exceed what has long been known, at least to Methodists: and they are welcome to make all they can out of the fact that before Wesley learnt the doctrine of justification by faith, he was such an *exaltado* in ecclesiastical bigotry as might suffice to entitle him to canonisation on the part of Anglican Ritualists of to-day, if unfortunately he had not, in 1738, become a Gospel believer and preacher.

But already, in Georgia, Wesley's mind was beginning to be enlightened. He had been a mere ecclesiastical moralist and formalist—a philosophical Church-ascetic: on the voyage to Georgia and in the colony, he learnt something of Christ. Some impression was made on his darkness by the example, the spirit, and the conversation of the Moravians, on ship-board, and on shore. He attended a Presbyterian service, at which he appears to have heard for the first time an extemporary prayer. He read the Homilies of his Church. He met with clergy of a freer spirit than himself, with less rubric and buckram, but with more evangelical feeling; and he notes in his Journal (unpublished) that, at a meeting of the clergy of the province, they had "such a conversation for several hours, on Christ our righteousness and example, with such seriousness and closeness as I never heard in England, in all the visitations I have been present at." More-

---

\* *Works*, ii. 154. I may here add, to make the parallel between Wesley's conduct in Georgia and the proceedings of our modern High-Churchmen still more striking and complete, although no charge to this effect was included in the indictment preferred against him, that he refused to bury those who had not been baptized "at church."

over, he attended a Moravian love-feast, and records how favourably and deeply he was impressed by it.

It was well that Wesley quitted the cloisters of Oxford for America. Had he remained at the University, he might have gone as far as Newman in one direction, or as Law in another. But his painful, practical experience in Georgia as a High-Church ecclesiastical administrator, his intercourse with German Moravians and Scottish Presbyterians, the freedom and variety of colonial life, and, above all, the introduction which he obtained, through the Moravians whom he had met with abroad, to Peter Böhler, on his return home, were the means used by Divine Providence to bring him forth from the house of ritualistic bondage into the good land of free religious fellowship and life.

Already, on his voyage homeward, he was an essentially altered man, unspeakably wiser than when he had left Oxford. The review which he made of his own religious opinions, of the course through which he had passed, the changes he had known, the lessons he had learnt—from which review I gave extracts some pages back—is decisive evidence of this. He was no longer a mere High-Churchman; he had learnt how unsafe a guide is tradition; he was no longer in danger of being misled by the pretended rule of general consent, *quod semper*, &c., or by the alleged authority of councils, or by any Popish or semi-Popish ecclesiastical pretensions. He had also learnt the hollowness and deceitfulness of mysticism. He had been chastened and humbled; he returned home “a sadder and a wiser man.” “He had learnt,” he tells us, “in the ends of the earth, that he who went to America to convert the Indians had never been converted himself.” In this state of mind, he was well prepared to receive the lessons of Peter Böhler, to whose instrumentality Methodism and the world owe a heavier debt than can be reckoned up.

Wesley landed from Georgia at Deal, on February 1, 1738. Within a week afterwards he met with Peter Böhler in London. The Moravian was fresh from Germany, on his way to Georgia. Wesley had repeated conversations with this good man, which ended in the Oxonian being completely convinced by the Moravian, that his had been a Christianity apart from all true apprehension of Christ by faith as his righteousness and his life.

Within a fortnight after John Wesley's being finally convinced by Böhler's Scriptural arguments and expositions, his brother Charles was brought to confess the truth of the new doctrine, as they had thought it, although in reality it was the old doctrine of Paul, of the Reformers, and of the Homilies. And the next day the Moravian set sail for Georgia. How remarkable are the words which Wesley wrote in his Journal that same day—"O what a work hath God begun since his (P. B.'s) coming into England! *Such an one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth pass away.*" Wesley felt that a revolution of the profoundest character had taken place in his own mind and heart, which must affect the whole system of his opinions and all his course; which must make his preaching new, supply a new impulse to his life and a new principle to his aims and methods; he felt that boundless results to himself, and all whom he could influence, and, through them, to multitudes innumerable, could not fail to flow from it. He and his brother had got hold of the apostolic lever—had been touched by the apostolic fire: how soon would Oxford and the kingdom begin to feel the spring of a new life!

Nothing can show more strikingly how utterly unevangelical had been Wesley's theology during his Oxford life, than a remarkable letter which, immediately after Peter Böhler had vanquished his resistance to the evangelical doctrine of faith in Christ, Wesley addressed to Law. From this letter the following is an extract; the date is May 14, 1738:—

"For two years, more especially, I have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises; and all that heard have allowed that the law is great, and wonderful and holy. . . . I exhorted them, and stirred up myself, to pray earnestly for the grace of God and to use all the other means" (*e.g.* attendance at public worship, private reading and meditation, fasting, self-mortification, self-examination and religious conversation, and sacramental communion) "of obtaining that grace, which the all-wise God hath appointed. But still, both they and I were more and more convinced, that this is a law by which a man cannot live. . . .

"Under this heavy yoke I might have groaned till death, had not a holy man to whom God lately directed me, upon my complaining thereof, answered at once, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved.'

"Now, sir, suffer me to ask, How will you answer it to our common Lord, that you never gave me this advice? . . . Why did I scarce ever hear you name the name of Christ? Never, so as to ground anything upon 'faith in His blood'?"—*Wesley's Works*, vol. xii. p. 48.

What Wesley, in his theology, up to this time had received from his Church, was a ritualistic sacramentalism; what he had joined with this was a moral philosophy, elevated by the contemplation, mainly as set forth in semi-mystical books of devotion, of Christ as the Christian's pattern. As an Oxford Churchman he was a servile, but conscientious, ritualist, seeking for salvation by rites, and in sacraments, and through good works; as an individual thinker, contributing of his own intelligence and reflection to the building up of doctrine, he was, with the whole bent of his bias and to the utmost of his logical power, a philosopher. Law himself, when he was at his best, before he had developed his own mystical philosophy, had pronounced a remarkable sentence on Wesley, then his disciple, which Wesley never forgot, and which he found occasion emphatically to bring to Law's recollection in after-years. "I see where your mistake lies. You would have a philosophical religion; but there can be no such thing. So far as you add philosophy to religion, just so far you spoil it."\* And when Böhler was striving to bring Wesley to "the simplicity that is in Christ," he had to insist and exclaim, "My brother, my brother, that philosophy of thine must be purged away" (*excoquenda est ista philosophia tua*).† This tendency to philosophise remained with Wesley to the end. Some of his sermons derived from it a depth and richness of thought which amply attest the philosophic faculty and bias of the writer. Such, for instance, is that fine sermon on "The Original of the Law." And many occasional pieces, published in his *Magazine* (the *Arminian Magazine*) and elsewhere, showed how to the last the bent remained. But, as a general rule, Wesley rigidly restrained his disposition to speculate on Divine doctrines. He shunned all attempts to be wise above what is written. He was afraid to pry with eyes of human scrutiny into "the secret things which belong unto the Lord." Precisely in proportion to his own natural tendency to speculate, was the

\* *Works*, vol. ix. p. 445.

† *Ibid*, i. p. 80.

guard which he put upon himself. He looked on this side of his nature as peculiarly exposed to temptations, of which he dreaded the fascination, because he knew too well how terribly powerful it was. When he became a convert, however, to the grand doctrines of salvation by faith—involving the evangelical views of justification, regeneration, sanctification, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost—all through faith in Christ,—his whole system of opinions underwent a fundamental change. His mere philosophy was abandoned at once. He became a preacher of faith and a student of Paul. His ritualism was struck at its root with a mortal blow, and from that moment began to wither away. With his ritualism his High-Churchmanship could not but wither also away. A number of old and long customary prejudices and predilections—habits of thought and feeling which had become a second nature—still clung to him for a while, but these dropped off one by one, until scarcely a vestige of them was left. All the irregularities of the Methodist leader; his renunciation of Church bigotry and exclusiveness; his partial, but progressive and fundamental, separation from a church which imposed shackles on his evangelical activities, and frowned upon his converts; and the ultimate separation, in due sequence, of the church he had founded from the church in which he was nurtured; all these results were involved in this change. It is this which made the difference between Wesley and Newman. Newman renounced justification by faith, and clung to apostolical succession, therefore he went to Rome; Wesley embraced justification by faith, and renounced apostolical succession, therefore his people are a separate people from the Church of England.\*

High-Churchmen endeavour to strengthen themselves by an appeal to the early character and course of Wesley. The reply is, that all that made Wesley great, all that gave him evangelical power, all that enabled him to influence the nation with all its churches, to kindle the flame of the spread of which through the world he had so clear a foresight as soon as he had learnt from Böhler the true Gospel,—was derived from a source altogether apart from his High-Churchmanship, from a principle essentially

\* The parallel, and at the same time the contrast, between Wesley and Newman I have drawn out in my *Essays for the Times*, pp. 214—218.



antagonistic to all the characteristic principles and traditions of the High-Church party. His life and the life of Methodism was derived not from Oxford but from Germany, not from Anglicanism but from Moravianism. It is true, as we have seen, that he read the Homilies in Georgia; but they were set for him in a framework of ritualism, and even the Homilies are tinged by a traditionalism which mingles with their testimony to pure Gospel truth. At all events even the Homilies did not teach him the Gospel of grace; it was reserved for Peter Böhler to do this. And from the memorable month of April, 1738, in which Wesley came under the influence of Böhler, his High-Churchmanship began to die away.\*

---

\* It was not till after the pages in the text above had been written that I received, through the courtesy of the Rev. B. Frankland, the official editor of the Wesleyan Connexion, the sheets of the excellent Introduction to Mr. Lockwood's *Life of Peter Böhler*, as they were passing through the press. The venerable Thomas Jackson, who entered the Wesleyan ministry in the year 1804, and held for eighteen years the office of Connexional editor, and afterwards for nineteen years that of Theological Tutor at the Richmond Wesleyan College, is the author of that Introduction. He is by far the highest living authority as to all which relates to the history of the Wesleys, and there are many who regret every day that, besides his admirable *Life of Charles Wesley*, he has not given to the Christian world a standard life of John Wesley. Such a life must be written before long, and, it is to be feared, will now be written by some less competent hand. Meantime, this Introduction is a slight instalment towards the needful work. The following passage is so strikingly in harmony with the view given in our text, that I should be greatly to blame if I did not make room for its insertion in this note:—

"Within the last few years certain periodical works, conducted by ritualistic clergymen, have expressed great respect for Mr. Wesley, and the writers have claimed him as belonging to their brotherhood, chiefly on the ground of his sayings and doings in Georgia, and before he entered upon his mission there. He then held the theory of apostolical succession; refused to administer the Lord's Supper to a Dissenter, unless he would submit to be rebaptised; and turned his face to the east when he repeated the Creed. He most probably mixed the sacramental wine with water; prayed standing on Whit-Sunday; and certainly deemed himself a sacrificing priest. We would suggest to the gentlemen who admire John Wesley on account of these things, that a distinction should be drawn between John Wesley the Ritualist, the ascetic disciple of William Law, and John Wesley the converted evangelist; just as a distinction should be made between Saul of Tarsus and 'Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.' As a Ritualist and a disciple of William Law, Mr. Wesley was unhappy; his preaching was powerless, and of very little use to mankind. When he had 'put off the old man,' and was invested with a truly evangelical character, he was heartily ashamed of his former deeds; he possessed a 'peace which passeth all understanding,' and was one of the most useful men that ever lived. In reference to his ritualistic and ascetic follies, he was ever ready to say, 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought (reasoned) as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' The sooner his ritualistic admirers follow his example, the better it will be for themselves, their congregations, and the country at large."

The High-Churchman makes salvation to be directly dependent on sacramental grace and "apostolical succession" (so called). The evangelical believer, the man who has received the doctrine of salvation by faith, as it was taught by Peter Böhler, and as it is understood by the Reformed Churches in general, learns from St. Paul that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Hence according to his conviction the Christian salvation—justification, regeneration, and sanctification—must be realised by means of the "truth as it is in Jesus." Truth and life are for him indissolubly associated. He cannot forget the words of the Word Himself, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is Truth;" and again, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" nor the words of St. Paul, when he speaks of himself and his fellow-workers as "by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." It is the truth in the sacraments, according to his view, which fills them with blessing to those who receive them with faith; they are "signs and seals," eloquent symbols and most sacred pledges; but they are not, in and of themselves, saturated with grace and life, they are *not* the only organ and vehicle through which grace flows to the members of Christ's mystical body, altogether irrespective of any Divine truth, apprehended and embraced by the mind and heart of the believer.

Wesley, up to 1738, had been a High-Church sacramentalist; all his life afterwards he taught the evangelical doctrine of salvation by faith. The grave-clothes of ritualistic superstition still hung about him for a little while, even after he had come forth from the sepulchre, and had, in his heart and soul, been set loose and free; and he only cast them off gradually. But the new principle he had embraced could not but lead before long to his emancipation from all the anti-evangelical prejudices to which he had been in bondage.

If salvation is by the truth as it is in Jesus, through the influence of the Divine Spirit; if the one appointed means whereby men are to be brought to Christ, is "the manifestation of the truth to their consciences;" it follows evidently that the truth may be savingly made known by any Christian, who has himself been made a partaker of it in its saving power. The artisan may preach Christ by the way; the peasant in his cottage; and no



one either can or ought to be hindered from testifying that which has come home to himself as new light and life, in "the demonstration of the Spirit and in power." The parent must preach Christ to his child; the friend to his friend; neighbour to neighbour. The lawfulness and fitness of lay-preaching follow from this; from this, indeed, it follows that in every church laymen ought to have free opportunity to preach, under such regulations to secure order as may be needful. Laymen in the first age "went everywhere preaching the Word." It follows, further, that the accepted "pastor and teacher" of any church, "who feeds them with knowledge and understanding," cannot but be regarded by that church as the fittest person to administer ordinarily within its limits those sacraments which are the signs and seals of the Christian profession. Only on the ground of a degrading and unspiritual sacramental superstition can it be contended, that any man who is accepted by any Christian Church as its ordinary spiritual guide and instructor can be unfit, for the lack of some outward circumstance or of official and ceremonial connection with some priestly caste, to administer to his flock the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

A glance at the history of John Wesley after 1738 will show how the new light and life operated in his case, how complete a revolution had been wrought in his mind and soul through the instructions of Peter Böhler. Being shut out of all the churches but a very few, and being followed by larger crowds than any church would hold, very early in 1739, Wesley followed Whitfield's example by beginning to preach in the open-air. The cross was very great; the reproach and ridicule were very hard to bear: but, at all hazards, the new truth must be preached to the eager crowds. "The love of Christ constrained" the preacher with a peremptory and irrepressible power. New societies were formed—not Moravian, but Methodist—and were divided into "bands." A meeting-house was built in Bristol, and settled on trustees for Wesley's use. All this was before the autumn of 1739. In 1740, the refusal of the clergy in Bristol to administer the Lord's Supper to the Methodists had already driven Wesley and his brother Charles to administer it to their societies in their own meeting-house. The

next year (1741) Wesley was constrained, after a sharp struggle, to sacrifice his deep-seated prejudices, and to authorise his schoolmaster at the Foundery, Thomas Maxfield, to preach. He was the first Methodist lay-preacher. From this time, Wesley speedily gathered lay-assistants. Class-meetings (as distinguished from the early band-meetings) were organised in Bristol in 1742.

In June, 1744, Wesley held his first Conference at the Foundery. This meeting consisted only of ordained clergymen, but the lay-assistants were called in. His second Conference, held at Bristol, in August, 1745, consisted chiefly of his lay-preachers, besides himself and his brother. This was a most important Conference, in its relations to the subject now under review; and the extract that here follows shows what a radical change Wesley's ideas as to Church government had undergone in the seven years which had elapsed since he had personally entered, through faith, into "the liberty of the children of God."

"ON SATURDAY, August 3,

"Were considered points of Discipline.

"Q. 1. Can he be a spiritual governor of the church, who is not a believer, not a member of it?

"A. It seems not; though he may be a governor in outward things, by a power derived from the King.

"Q. 2. What are properly the laws of the Church of England?

"A. The Rubricks: and to those we submit as the ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.

"Q. 3. But is not the will of our governors a law?

"A. No; not of any governor, temporal or spiritual. Therefore, if any bishop wills that I should not preach the Gospel, his will is no law to me.

"Q. 4. But what if he produce a law against your preaching?

"A. I am to obey God rather than man.

"Q. 5. Is Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent church government most agreeable to reason?

"A. The plain origin of church-government seems to be this. Christ sends forth a preacher of the Gospel. Some who hear him repent and believe the Gospel. They then desire him to watch over them, to build them up in the faith, and to guide their souls in the paths of righteousness.

"Here, then, is an *Independent* congregation; subject to no pastor but their own, neither liable to be controlled in things spiritual, by any other man, or body of men, whatsoever.

"But soon after, some from other parts, who are occasionally present while he speaks in the name of Him that sent him, beseech him to come over to help them also. Knowing it to be the will of God, he consents, yet not till he has conferred with the wisest and holiest of his congregation, and with their advice appointed one or more, who have gifts and grace, to watch over the flock till his return.

"If it please God to raise another flock in the new place, before he leaves them, he does the same thing: appointing one whom God has fitted for the work to watch over these souls also. In like manner, in every place where it pleases God to gather a little flock by His Word, he appoints one in his absence to take the oversight of the rest, and to assist them of the abilities which God giveth. These are *deacons*, or servants of the church, and look on the first pastor as their common father. And all these congregations regard him in the same light, and esteem him still as the shepherd of their souls.

"These congregations are not absolutely *independent*; they depend on one pastor, though not on each other.

"As these congregations increase, and as their deacons grow in years and grace, they need other subordinate deacons, or helpers: in respect of whom they may be called *presbyters*, or elders; as their father in the Lord may be called the *Bishop*, or Overseer of them all.

"Q. 6. Is mutual consent absolutely necessary between the pastor and his flock?

"A. No question. I cannot guide any soul unless he consent to be guided by me. Neither can any soul force me to guide him, if I consent not.

"Q. 7. Does the ceasing of this consent on either side dissolve that relation?

"A. It must, in the very nature of things. If a man no longer consent to be guided by me, I am no longer his guide; I am free. If one will not guide me any longer, I am free to seek one who will."—*Minutes*, vol. i. pp. 26, 27.

In the *Disciplinary Minutes* for 1746 it is set down that the Wesleys and their helpers (all are classed together) may "perhaps be regarded as extraordinary messengers, designed of God to provoke the others to jealousy." There is also great significance in another question and answer given at the same Conference—"Why do we not use more form and solemnity in the receiving of a new labourer? We purposely decline it. First, because there is something of stateliness in it; second, because we would not make haste. We desire to follow Providence as it

gradually opens.”\* In the *Disciplinary Minutes* for 1747, Wesley gives a definition and certain distinctions and conclusions in regard to “schism,” which I commend to the attention of any who may imagine that he remained a High-Churchman in his years of mature experience and judgment, or after he had come to be the head of the Methodist societies.† But I must quote at length one portion of these Minutes, because it is so full of instruction, and sets the question of Wesley’s High-Churchmanship so completely at rest:—

“Q. 6. Does a church in the New Testament always mean a single congregation?

“A. We believe it does. We do not recollect any instance to the contrary.

“Q. 7. What instance or ground is there, then, in the New Testament for a *National Church*?

“A. We know none at all. We apprehend it to be a merely political institution.

“Q. 8. Are the three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons plainly described in the New Testament?

“A. We think they are; and believe they generally obtained in the churches of the apostolic age.

“Q. 9. But are you assured that God designed the same plan should obtain in all churches, throughout all ages?

“A. We are not assured of this; because we do not know that it is asserted in Holy Writ.

“Q. 10. If this plan were essential to a Christian church, what would become of all the foreign Reformed Churches?

“A. It would follow, they are no parts of the church of Christ! A consequence full of shocking absurdity.

“Q. 11. In what age was the Divine right of Episcopacy first asserted in England?

“A. About the middle of Queen Elizabeth’s reign. Till then, all the Bishops and Clergy in England continually allowed and joined in the ministration of those who were not episcopally ordained.

“Q. 12. Must there not be numberless accidental varieties in the government of various churches?

“A. There must, in the nature of things. For, as God variously dispenses His gifts of nature, providence, and grace, both the offices themselves and the officers in each ought to be varied from time to time.

“Q. 13. Why is it, that there is no determinate plan of church government appointed in Scripture?

---

\* *Minutes*, vol. i. pp. 30, 31.

† *Ibid.* p. 35.

"A. Without doubt, because the wisdom of God had a regard to this necessary variety.

"Q. 14. Was there any thought of uniformity in the government of all churches until the time of Constantine?

"A. It is certain there was not; and would not have been then had men consulted the Word of God only."—*Minutes*, p. 36.

It was, in fact, in the year 1746 that Wesley may be said to have thrown overboard finally the last of his High-Church leanings. In that year he read Lord King's *Account of the Primitive Church*, which made him virtually a Presbyterian, so far as respects the fundamental principles of church-government. The views expressed in the extract we have just given from the *Minutes* for 1747 were derived immediately from the Chancellor's treatise; and that Wesley retained these views to the end of his life is attested by abundant evidence of the most distinct and decisive character. In his "Letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America," dated September 10th, 1784, he expounds his views in the same manner as in the foregoing extract, making specific reference to Lord King's *Account of the Primitive Church*; and he closes this letter with the following sentence:—"As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church; and we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free." For which reason, among others, Wesley had no desire, in 1784, that "the English bishops should ordain part of our preachers for America."\* And in the following year, in reply to a letter of remonstrance from his brother Charles, he explained, with fulness as well as with characteristic precision, the principles which he had held "for forty years" without wavering. In this letter he quotes, as descriptive of the priesthood of the Church of England, a line from one of Charles's own poems—

"Heathenish priests and mitred infidels:"

in regard to which line he says, in a letter dated three weeks later, "Your verse is a sad truth. I see fifty times more of England than you do, and I find few exceptions to it." He re-

---

\* *Works*, vol. xiii. pp. 238, 239.



affirms the substance of what is contained in the extracts I have given from the *Disciplinary Minutes* for 1745 and 1747; he declares, as to the “‘uninterrupted succession,’ I know it to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove.” He explains that all that he had meant from the beginning by “separating from the Church,” was refusing to “go to church;” and he proceeds as follows:—

“But here another question occurs: ‘What is the Church of England?’ It is not all the people of England. Papists and Dissenters are no part thereof. It is not all the people of England, except Papists and Dissenters. Then we should have a glorious Church indeed! No: according to our twentieth Article, a particular church is a ‘congregation of faithful people’ (*cætus credentium* are the words of our Latin edition), ‘among whom the Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered.’ Here is a true logical definition, containing both the essence and the properties of a church. What, then, according to this definition is the Church of England? Does it mean all the believers in England (except the Papists and Dissenters) who have the Word of God and the sacraments administered among them? I fear this does not come up to your idea of the Church of England. Well, what more do you include in the phrase? ‘Why, all the believers that adhere to the doctrine and discipline established by the Convocation under Queen Elizabeth.’ Nay, that discipline is well-nigh vanished away, and the doctrine both you and I adhere to.

“All those reasons against a separation from the Church in this sense, I subscribe to still: what, then, are you frightened at? I no more separate from it now than I did in the year 1758. I submit still (though sometimes with a doubting conscience) to ‘mitred infidels.’ I do indeed vary from them in some points of doctrine, and in some points of discipline (by preaching abroad, for instance, by praying extempore, and by forming Societies); but not a hair’s breadth further than I believe to be meet, right, and my bounden duty. I walk still by the same rule I have done for between forty and fifty years. I do nothing rashly. It is not likely I should. The hey-day of my blood is over. If you will go on hand in hand with me, do. But do not hinder me, if you will not help me. However, with or without help, I creep on: and as I have been hitherto, so I trust I shall always be,

“Your affectionate Friend and Brother.”

—Smith’s *History of Methodism*, vol. i. pp. 520, 521.

For thirty years up to the date of the letter from which I have now quoted, there had been a controversy between Wesley



and his brother Charles in regard to this matter of separation from the Church of England. Charles approved of lay preaching, separate meetings, and all else that belonged to the earliest Methodism. But he resolutely contended against the administration of the sacraments by the preachers. He admitted that his brother had a scriptural right to ordain his preachers to administer, but he saw that if some were ordained, all would, sooner or later, claim to be ordained. Hence, from the first, he opposed his brother's ordaining; he opposed the ordinations for Scotland, and even for America, as well as for England. He lived in hope, sometimes sanguine, more often desperate and scarce surviving, that a bishop would be raised up to ordain the best of the preachers in succession, as they became ripe for ordination, to cures in the Church of England. He would thus have made Methodism a nursery for evangelical pastors and preachers in the Church of England, and an outwork of the Establishment. He was, however, himself, practically even less of a Churchman than his brother. And his hopes of a bishop were continually disappointed. "The bishops might, if they pleased," he wrote to Mr. Latrobe, the Moravian minister, in 1785, "save the largest and soundest part of them back into the Church; perhaps to leaven the whole lump, as Archbishop Potter said to me. *But I fear, however, betwixt you and me, their lordships care for none of these things.* Still I should hope, if God raised up but one primitive bishop, and commanded the porter to open the door."\*

"Yet," says Mr. Jackson, "there was a singular discrepancy between his theory of Churchmanship and his conduct. For thirty years he made more noise on the subject of the continued union of Methodists with the Church than any man of the age; and all this while he was, beyond comparison, the greatest practical separatist in the whole Connexion. Mr. John Wesley spent most of his time in travelling through Great Britain and Ireland, often preaching twice every day, and two or three times on the Sabbath. Rarely, however, did he preach in Church hours, except when he officiated for a brother clergyman. He so arranged his public services as to attend the church where he happened to be; and he pressed the people that heard him to accompany him thither. Many of the itinerant preachers pursued the same course. They preached to their own congrega-

---

\* Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 402.

tions at an early hour on the Sunday morning, at noon, and in the evening; and in the forenoon and afternoon they were present, with their people, at the service of the Church. This was the recognised plan of Methodist practice; and though several refused to conform to it, especially where the clergy were unfriendly or immoral, yet others were even zealous for it, especially where the clergy were kind and tolerant.

"But this was not the state of things in London, under the administration of Mr. Charles Wesley. He preached twice during Church hours every Sabbath, and indulged the society with a weekly sacrament at their own places of worship; so that they had no opportunity of attending their several churches, nor any motive to attend them. He conducted Divine worship, indeed, according to the order of the Church of England, except that he used extemporary prayer, and sang his own beautiful hymns; but he and the society had otherwise no more connection with the Established Church than any Dissenting minister and congregation had. He was under no episcopal control; the chapels in which he officiated were licensed by no bishop: and the clergy in whose parishes those chapels were situated were never consulted as to the time and manner of Divine service. The uneasiness which frequently arose in some of the country societies took its origin in part from this state of things. They wished to be upon an equality with their metropolitan brethren; and they were never satisfied either during the life-time of the Wesleys, or after their death, till this was conceded to them."—*Jackson's Charles Wesley*, vol. ii. pp. 404, 405.\*

John Wesley strove to hope, "hoping against hope," like his brother, that through the wisdom of the bishops some way might be devised for preserving Methodism in its spirit and discipline, and yet keeping the Methodists in communion with the Church of England, and making it subsidiary to that Church—a source to it of life and power. But as years passed on, and all his intimations were rejected; as it became more and more evident that Methodism was producing little or no change within the recognised precincts of the Church itself; and that the clergy and their bishops, with scarcely an exception, were determined to frown upon Methodism; while the needs of the people of England still

---

\* Mr. Bradburn, in his pamphlet, *Are the Methodists Dissenters?* which was published in 1792, after quoting Mr. Wesley's letter to his brother Charles, from which we have given an extract on page 46, proceeds to say of Charles Wesley, "Though he hardly ever went to church, and was no more under the jurisdiction of a Bishop than I am, yet he was so attached to the name of a Churchman, that I heard him say, he should be afraid to meet his father's spirit in Paradise, if he left the Church! Mr. John Wesley, on the other hand, as we have seen, remained therein with a doubting conscience."

pressed as before, and the demands of his own societies at home and abroad to have provided for them the due administration of the Holy Sacraments were continually becoming more general and more resolute;—Wesley was obliged, however reluctantly, to ordain some of his preachers. We have seen what the case of America was; that of Scotland was scarcely less clear; in parts of England, where crowds of Methodists found only profane, often insulting, clergymen, it was impossible—it would have been monstrous—continually to withstand their demand. Wesley did withstand the demands of many of his people, and the convictions of not a few of his best preachers, so long as to drive a considerable number both of the preachers and people outright into Dissent. Mr. Edwards founded an Independent church at Leeds, Titus Knight one at Halifax, John Bennet a number in Lancashire, Charles Skelton one at Southwark, and so forth. It is quite certain that, but for the sacramental ministrations of the Wesleys, of the few clergymen who assisted them, as Grimshaw, Fletcher, and Dickinson, and of the few preachers whom he ordained, the number of Independent churches formed out of Methodist churches would have been much greater. And after Wesley's death, if the preachers had not at length, after some years of turmoil and intense excitement, yielded to the reasonable demands of the people, and consented to allow the sacraments to be administered in those societies in which otherwise peace could not have been preserved, it is certain that tens of thousands of Dissenters would have been added to the ranks of those who were opposed on principle to the existence of the Established Church.

It was in 1755 that the demands of the preachers and the societies for the administration of the Lord's Supper among themselves, and by the hands of the preachers, first began to make themselves powerfully felt. Wesley had much ado to resist the importunities of his flock, which were enforced with much feeling and with the weight of strong reasons. Such men as Thomas Walsh and Joseph Cownley—that is to say, the very best of his preachers—headed this movement. For five, ten, fifteen years they had been preaching, and the societies had grown up to maturity under their pastoral care and instructions. It was no wonder that they felt that the pastoral character of

those who were *de facto* the ministers of the churches ought to be completed; and it is very much to the credit of these excellent men and able preachers that considerations of Christian expediency, forcibly urged by John Wesley, prevailed with them to hold their claims in abeyance, and to labour on—in some cases for more than thirty years afterwards—as mere preaching deacons. Those who wish to understand fully all that belongs to this interesting section of Methodist history, must study the pages of Mr. Jackson, in his *Life of Charles Wesley*. It was in connection with this that the controversy began between Wesley and his brother Charles, some of the last passages in which, thirty years later, have been already referred to. Mr. Jackson says:—

“The year 1755 was a sort of crisis in Methodism, because then a controversy on these subjects began, which was not finally settled until some years after the founders of the system had ended their life and labours. In London and Bristol the Lord’s Supper was regularly administered by a clergyman; but in most other places both the preachers and the societies were expected to attend this ordinance in their several parish churches. In many instances the clergy who officiated there were not only destitute of piety, but were immoral in their lives; and doubts arose, whether such men, notwithstanding their ordination, were true ministers of Christ, and whether it was not a sin to encourage them in the performance of duties for which they were so manifestly destitute of the requisite qualifications. The clergyman at Epworth, who repelled Mr. John Wesley from the Lord’s Table, and assaulted him before the whole congregation, was notoriously drunk at the time. In other cases, the doctrine which was taught in the churches was deemed not only defective but positively erroneous; especially when justification by faith, and the work of the Holy Spirit, were peremptorily denied and opposed. Several of the clergy were directly concerned in the instigation of riotous proceedings against the Methodists, by which their property was destroyed, and their lives were endangered; and if the sufferers forgave these injuries, it was too much to expect that they would contentedly receive the memorials of the Saviour’s death at the hands of men who had encouraged such outrages upon humanity and justice. If John Nelson could profitably receive the Holy Communion from the minister who, by bearing false witness against him, had succeeded in tearing him away from his family, and sending him into the army, every one had not John’s meekness and strength of mind. Not a few of the clergy absolutely refused to administer the Lord’s Supper to the Methodists. When these people approached

the table of the Lord, they were singled out among the communicants and denied the sacred emblems of their Redeemer's body and blood. This was the case, as we have seen, at Bristol, at Leeds, in Derbyshire, and other places; so that the Methodists were compelled either to receive the Lord's Supper at the hands of their own preachers, or in the Dissenting Chapel, or to violate the command of the Lord, who has charged all His disciples to 'eat of this bread and drink of this cup.' Great uneasiness therefore existed among the preachers, and in several of the societies."—*Jackson's Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. ii. pp. 68, 69.

In regard to what was determined upon at the Conference of 1755, Wesley wrote to his brother, as follows:—

"Do not you understand that they all promised by Thomas Walsh, not to administer, even among themselves? I think that a huge point given up; perhaps more than they could give up with a clear conscience.

"They showed an excellent spirit in this very thing. Likewise when I (not to say you) spoke once and again, spoke *satis pro imperio*, when I reflected on their answers, I admired their spirit, and was ashamed of my own.

"The practical conclusion was, not to separate from the Church. Did we not all agree in this? Surely either you or I must have been asleep, or we could not differ so widely in a matter of fact.

"Here is Charles Perronet raving, because his friends have given up all; and Charles Wesley, because they have given up nothing; and I, in the midst, staring and wondering both at one and the other.

"I do not want to do anything more, unless I could bring them over to my opinion: and I am not in haste for that.

"Cyprian is a terrible witness of the sense of the then church; for he speaks it not as his own private sense, but an incontestable allowed rule: and by *Antistes* there, I really believe he means the minister of a parish. That pinches me. Nevertheless, I think with you, till I get more light; though I should be hard set to defend myself against a skilful adversary. When I am convinced it is my duty, I will follow Cyprian's advice. The same say you, and no more. I do not fluctuate yet; but I cannot answer the arguments on that side of the question. Joseph Cownley says, 'For such and such reasons, I dare not hear a drunkard preach, or read prayers.' I answer, I dare: but I cannot answer his reasons.

"Eight days after the date of this letter, Mr. John Wesley again wrote to his brother on the same subject. 'Wherever I have been in England,' says he, 'the societies are far more firmly and rationally attached to the Church than ever they were be-



fore. I have no fear about this matter. I only fear the preachers' or the people's leaving, not the Church, but the love of God, and inward or outward holiness. To this I press them forward continually. I dare not, in conscience, spend my time and strength on externals. If, as my Lady says,\* all outward Establishments are Babel, so is this Establishment. Let it stand for me. I neither set it up nor pull it down. But let you and I build up the city of God.

“ ‘Thomas Walsh (I will declare it on the house-top) has given me all the satisfaction I desire, and all that an honest man could give. I love, admire, and honour him; and wish we had six preachers in all England of his spirit. But enough of this. Let us draw the saw no longer, but use all our talents to promote the mind that was in Christ.

“ ‘We have not one preacher who either proposed, or desires, or designs (that I know), to separate from the Church at all. Their principles in this single point of ordination I do not approve; but I pray for more and more of their spirit (in general) and practice.

“ ‘Driving may make me fluctuate; though I do not yet.’ ”—*Jackson's Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. ii. pp. 82, 84.

What has now been said is sufficient to prove that Wesley was as low a Churchman as a man well could be. He was a Presbyterian in principle;† he held that, with or without formal ordination, one who had been the means of raising up a Christian church, and was accepted by that church as its pastor, could not but possess all the prerogatives of the ministerial office; he totally disallowed the dogma of eucharistic grace, *ex opere operato*;‡ he regarded the National Church as a merely political institution, and in several places intimates his opinion that the union, for political reasons, of Church and State had been a source of abounding corruption to Christianity;§ and he grounded his objections to a separation from the Church of England on no High-Church dogmas as to the sin of schism, but exclusively on considerations of Christian

\* Lady Huntingdon.

† His “Superintendents” or Bishops were to be only *primi inter pares*.

‡ Roman Catechism, *Works*, vol. x. pp. 109, 146.

§ *Minutes*, i. 36. *Works*, xii. 110; xiii. 238. It would be an error, however, to infer that Wesley was, in principle, opposed to the union of Church and State, under all circumstances, or to any interference of the State in questions of religion. Wesley was a student of history, and knew how Church and State in England had grown up in one, each being to the other as an *alter ego*; knew, too, that at the time of the Reformation, if the Pope were not to be the head of the One Church, the Sovereign must perforce take the position of head of the National Church. Wesley rejoiced, however, in the liberty from State control and traditional trammels which Methodism found in the United States.



expediency. He hoped in his day for some such scheme of comprehension as I have indicated—for some scheme resembling in general what is now talked about by such well-meaning men as Mr. Medd and Mr. Lyttelton, but which is now proposed a century too late.\*

Wesley was well aware that what he had done amounted to partial separation from the Church of England, and that this was very likely to spread further and further; he knew that he had done a number of things, each of which contained the principle of a complete separation, unless the Church of England should take some special means of reform, extension, and comprehension, to prevent such a separation, and to gather into organic connexion the churches of Methodism. His longing was that such means might be taken: and, as long as it was possible, he would, for his part, keep the door of hope for union open. His object was not division or separation, but revival and reanimation. Hence his stout and invincible opposition to all proposals for express and general separation from the Church. If separation was to ensue, he would leave the blame of it entirely on the supineness or the contempt and intolerance of the Anglican clergy. His hand, at least, should not sever the tie. He knew, however, that unless a change came over the character and policy of the clergy, a separation must come before long after his death. He knew that the very steps he had taken had shown the way to effect such a separation: and he never repented of those steps, although he saw most clearly whither they pointed.

---

\* There is one short sharp test which will settle whether Wesley was a High-Churchman or a Low-Churchman. The High-Churchman rests upon his apostolical "orders," his "succession;" the Low-Churchman relies upon the Articles, the Homilies, and the general spirit of the common worship of the Established Church. He is an illogical and spurious Low-Churchman who mixes up with these things the properly High-Church dogma of the "uninterrupted succession." Now, on which side was Wesley? We have seen that he makes short work with the "succession" as a "fable which no man ever did or can prove." But yet more clearly and definitely Low-Church is the following passage, which shows Wesley to have been of all Low-Churchmen the lowest. "My conclusion, which I cannot yet give up, that it is lawful to continue in the Church, stands, I know not how, without any premises that are to bear its weight. I know the original doctrines of the Church are sound; I know her worship is in the main pure and scriptural. But if the 'essence of the Church of England, considered as such, consists in her orders and laws' (many of which I myself can say nothing for), 'and not in her worship and doctrines,' those who separate from her have a far stronger plea than I was ever sensible of."—*Works*, xiii. p. 185.

Had the Church known the day of her visitation, no separation need have ensued. If it did not, a separation was inevitable, and even desirable; and it was necessary that the way wisely to provide against such a contingency should be indicated. Besides, every one of the steps he had taken had been imperatively forced upon him by the necessities of his evangelical labours. Providence had indicated them. The work must have been brought to a stand without them. And if, through the obstinacy of the Church of England, steps thus forced upon Wesley were to prepare the way for a separation, this also must be right, and in the order of Providence.\*

When Wesley organized a system of religious societies, altogether independent of the parochial clergy and of Episcopal control, but dependent absolutely on himself, he took a step towards raising up a separate communion, especially as the "rules" of his societies contained no requirement of allegiance to the Established Church. When he built meeting-houses, which were settled on trustees for his own use, and began (with his brother) to administer the sacraments in these houses, a further step was taken in the same direction. Calling out lay-preachers, wholly devoted to the work of preaching and visitation, was still a step in advance towards the same issue.† The yearly Conferences tended obviously in the same direction. The legal constitution of the Conference in 1784, and the provision for vesting in it all

\* The following extract from Wesley's Journal, under date August 4, 1788 (*Works*, vol. iv.), will illustrate what is said in the text. "The sum of a long conversation [at a Conference] was—1. That in a course of fifty years we had neither premeditatedly nor willingly varied in one article of doctrine or discipline. 2. That we were not yet conscious of varying from it in any one point of doctrine. 3. That we have in a course of years, out of necessity, slowly and warily varied in some points of discipline, by preaching in the fields, by extemporary prayer, by employing lay-preachers, by forming and regulating societies, and by holding yearly conferences. But we did none of these things till we were convinced we could no longer omit them, but at the peril of our souls." It must be admitted, however, that the list of "variations" is very formidable, and that it would be difficult to discover in what respect, for fifty years, Wesley had adhered, as a clergyman, to the discipline of his Church. He had been constrained, in fact, to found a separate community, established on principles and informed with a spirit altogether in contrariety to the principles and spirit of the Anglican Establishment.

† When this step was challenged, he met the challenge in a style which shows how radical an anti-High-Churchman was Wesley. "I do assure you, this at present is my chief embarrassment. That I have not gone too far yet, I know; but whether I have gone far enough, I am extremely doubtful. . . . Soul-damning clergymen lay me under more difficulties than soul-saving laymen."—*Works*, xiii. p. 197.

the preaching-places and trust property of the Connexion, was a most important measure, giving to the union of Societies a legally corporate character, and large property rights. The ordination of ministers, even for America, necessary as it undoubtedly was, nevertheless, as Charles pointed out forcibly at the time, could hardly fail to conduct towards the result which Wesley had so long striven to avert—viz. the general ordination of his preachers in Great Britain.\* If it was necessary to ordain for America, they would plead that it was highly expedient to ordain for England. The principle was conceded, the only question was one of time and fitness as to its more extended application. The ordinations for Scotland were refused by Wesley as long as he could refuse with either safety or consistency. Without them his people would, in very many cases, have been left quite without the sacraments, as the Calvinistic controversy had become embittered, and Wesley and his followers were accounted heretics by the orthodox in Scotland. Nevertheless, ordaining for Scotland could not but hasten the day when preachers must be ordained for England. It was hard to require that Mr. Taylor should administer in Scotland, and hold himself forbidden and unable to administer in England. And when at length Wesley was compelled to ordain a few ministers for England, it could not but be seen that what had been done in the case of the few could not always be refused as respected their brethren at large. As little could it be expected that, while, for various good reasons, in addition to London and Bristol, more and more places were allowed to enjoy the privilege of preaching in Church hours, the concession of the same privilege to other places which might desire it could be permanently denied.†

All these arrangements were compelled by the spiritual exi-

\* Smith's *History of Methodism*, i. 519.

† The following was Wesley's final concession at the Conference of 1788, in regard to preaching in Church hours:—"The preachers shall have a discretionary power to read the Prayer-book in the preaching hours on Sunday mornings, where they think it expedient, if the generality of the society acquiesce with it; on condition that Divine service never be performed in Church hours on the Sundays, when the sacrament is administered in the Parish Church where the preaching-house is situated, and the people be strenuously exhorted to attend the sacrament in the Parish Church on those Sundays" (Smith i. 555; *Minutes of Conference*, 1788). In London, Bristol, and a few other places, however, the Methodists still, as for many years past, received the sacrament in their own meeting-house from Methodist ministers. There the separation from the Church of England had long been complete.

gencies of the societies. Most of them were made immediately necessary by the character and conduct of the clergy. What the character of the clergy was, may best be learned from Anglican writers. Their witness against them is much more stern and severe than that of the Wesleys or of any Methodist writers whose publications are preserved to us.\* And as to their conduct towards the Methodists, the mere fact that they denounced them everywhere from their pulpits, discouraged and annoyed them in every private way, and commonly repelled them from the Lord's Table, explains and justifies the necessity which pressed on Wesley for allowing separate services, for administering the sacraments in his own preaching-rooms, and for ordaining his preachers—*i.e.* for taking some of the most serious and decisive of all the steps which he did take towards establishing a separate communion.

But the most decisive step of all towards separation which the Methodists could take, was one which was deliberately forced upon them by the Church of England itself, under the guidance of its bishops. The Methodists were pitilessly, and with callous contempt, driven by persecution most reluctantly to license their meeting-houses as "Protestant Dissenting" places of worship, or else to forego all the protection and benefits of the Toleration Act. One of Wesley's latest letters—a pathetic letter it is—refers to this subject.

It is addressed to one of the bishops, and is as follows:—

"MY LORD,—It may seem strange that one who is not acquainted with your lordship, should trouble you with a letter. But I am constrained to do it: I believe it is my duty both to God and your lordship. And I must speak plain; having nothing to hope or fear in this world, which I am on the point of leaving.

"The Methodists, in general, my lord, are members of the Church of England. They hold all her doctrines, attend her service, and partake of her sacraments. They do not willingly do harm to any one, but do what good they can to all. To encourage each other herein, they frequently spend an hour together in prayer and mutual exhortation. Permit me, then, to ask, *Cui bono?* 'For what reasonable end' would your lordship drive these people out of the Church? Are they not as quiet, as

---

\* Edward Perronet's *Mitre* was a bitter attack on the Church. But its author became the pastor of an Independent congregation, and the copies of his *Mitre* were bought up and suppressed by Mr. Wesley.

inoffensive, nay, as pious as any of their neighbours? except, perhaps, here and there a hair-brained man, who knows not what he is about. Do you ask, 'Who drives them out of the Church?' Your lordship does; and that in the most cruel manner; yea, and the most disingenuous manner. They desire a licence to worship God after their own conscience. Your lordship refuses it, and then punishes them for not having a licence! So your lordship leaves them only this alternative, 'Leave the Church or starve.' And is it a Christian, yea, a Protestant bishop, that so persecutes his own flock? I say, *persecutes*; for it is a persecution to all intents and purposes. You do not burn them, indeed, but you starve them. And how small is the difference! and your lordship does this under colour of a vile, execrable law, not a whit better than that *De Hæretico comburendo*. So persecution, which is banished out of France, is again countenanced in England.

"O my lord, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for pity's sake, suffer the poor people to enjoy their religious as well as civil liberty! I am on the brink of eternity! Perhaps so is your lordship too! How soon may you also be called to give an account of your stewardship to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls! May He enable both you and me to do it with joy! So prays, my lord,

"Your Lordship's dutiful Son and Servant."

—Smith's *History of Methodism*, vol. i. pp. 569, 570.

The effect of the policy pursued in this case by those who represented the Church of England, was to force both preachers and people to be licensed under the Toleration Act. Thus were Methodists driven to become, in legal construction, Protestant Dissenters. After eighty years, Churchmen are now seeking to reverse what was then done, not by Methodists, but by their own predecessors.\*

After Wesley's death, the preachers trod most strictly in the steps of their Founder; they breathed the self-same spirit: they "walked by the same rule;" they "minded the same thing." They took no step towards independence which was not

---

\* Some years before, the same controversy had been raised here and there, but not by way of general pressure on the Methodists. The Bishop of London excommunicated a clergyman for preaching without licence. This was coming near Wesley himself, and he wrote respecting it, "It is probable the point will now be determined concerning the Church, for if we must either *dissent or be silent*, actum est." "Church or no Church," he again wrote, "we must attend to the work of saving souls."—Stevens' *History of Methodism*, i. 398.



forced upon them ; they passed no resolution or law declaring or compelling separation. As many of the Methodists as chose were not only at liberty, but by the majority of the preachers were encouraged, to attend their parish church, and to take the sacrament from the parish priest. And for many years after Wesley's death a large proportion of the Methodists continued so to do. Only by degrees, and through individual conviction and preference, were the Methodists as a community actually separated from the Church of England.\*

After Wesley's death, indeed, the feeling which the venerable Founder of Methodism had, for many years, experienced the greatest difficulty in repressing, and which many among his preachers, and vastly more among his people, had only suppressed out of deference to the feelings and authority of one whom they regarded as their bishop and patriarch, broke out with overwhelming force. The people demanded what they could not but regard as their evangelical right—that the sacraments should be administered to them by those who had so long been their pastors and preachers. A number of trustees—men of property, in many instances ; in others, Methodists that had been, who had become Church formalists ; in some cases, good, single-eyed conservative followers of "Old Methodism"—and most of the preachers, were at first opposed to the people's demands. Year by year, however, the feeling of the societies became stronger and more unanimous ; the opposition of the trustees sank away ; the preachers became convinced that the people's demands must either be conceded, or Methodism altogether broken up, leaving no permanent result except a multitude of scattered Dissenting congregations. The Conference and the itinerancy would have been destroyed. Dissent would have been enormously strengthened ; the name of the Established Church would have been rendered intolerable to multitudes. Accordingly, after a resistance protracted for four years, it was settled at the Conference of 1795, that, where a majority of the stewards and leaders in any society, and also of the trustees of the chapel, desired it, the Lord's Supper might be administered. No society was advised to ask for this ; the tone of the Conference to the last was rather dissuatory : but provision was

---

\* See Joseph Benson's Letter to Mr. Thompson of Hull in 1800.



made that, society by society, where the members insisted on the sacraments being administered, they should be administered. This is all the separation from the Church of England which has ever taken place in Methodism. It took some twenty years to consummate the result. That result was that the ministers finally came to administer the sacrament in every circuit and every society.

This result was hastened by the continued misconduct of the clergy and their intolerant harshness to the Methodists. In 1800, according to the concurrent testimony of Churchmen themselves, the clergy at large were little, if at all, superior to what they had been fifty years before.

It is now the policy of Churchmen to allege that Wesley was a Churchman to the last, and that if Wesleyans were consistent they would be Churchmen too. Fifty, even thirty years ago, Churchmen took very different ground, and argued that Wesley was, throughout all his active career, a "schismatic" and no other than a Dissenter, whatever he might fancy himself to be. The facts are quite as much in favour of this view as of that now set forth by our modern Churchmen.

Truth, however, on the whole gains through these discussions. Feeling and opinion oscillate from one extreme to another; but there is progress notwithstanding towards an equitable and comprehensive settlement of the question. Churchmen now admit that the corruption and supineness of their Church in the middle of the last century were such as to justify irregularities; they admit, moreover, and lament that Wesley and his people were coarsely and often cruelly driven out from a communion in which he and his brother, most honestly and intensely, and many of his people very seriously, desired to remain. Further still, they justify by the schemes and proposals which, even at the present day, they set forth for the comprehension of Methodism, notwithstanding its separate existence for fifty years past, those ideas and hopes as to the possibility of retaining Methodism within the Church, if the bishops and clergy had but been willing, which the Wesleys ventured to indulge.

All this is so far good; it is eminently satisfactory to Methodists; it is accompanied with many indications of Christian candour and kindness on the part of Churchmen which ought

to be frankly and cordially acknowledged and reciprocated. It remains only for them to learn two things—that Wesley ceased to be a High-Churchman fifty years before his death, and that Wesleyan Methodism cannot be absorbed. The former point is, as I venture to affirm, settled by this investigation; the second may be said to be a direct consequence from the first, but is, besides, rendered certain by other considerations.

I have already referred to some of the publications by Wesleyans, in which this question of "absorption" is disposed of. Whilst these are readily accessible, and also the Histories of Dr. Smith and Dr. Stevens, there is no apology for Churchmen if they continue to cultivate ignorance respecting the ecclesiastical position of Methodism. Here all that can be done in the space remaining is to summarise the principal points involved.

Methodism, then, as I have noted in an early part of this pamphlet, if it were to be "reconciled" to the Church of England, would have to part company with the other Christian churches and communions throughout the world. The liberty of friendship and co-operation which it now enjoys would have to be given up. From a large and wealthy place, where almost all evangelical churches can meet, it would have to retire into a very strait room.

But what I would particularly ask Churchmen to consider is, that the genius of Methodism and Anglican Episcopacy are mutually repellent and exclusive. In the Church of England everything depends upon and descends from the minister, or, as they say, "the priest." This is not the case in Methodism. No leader can be appointed without the concurring vote of the "Leaders' Meeting," nor any local preacher be admitted on trial or into full recognition except on the resolution and by the vote of the Local Preachers' Meeting. The power of discipline is, to a large extent, in the hands of the Leaders' Meeting. No member can be censured or expelled, unless he has been found guilty at a Leaders' Meeting, or by a Committee of the Quarterly Meeting. No minister can be introduced into the pulpit of a Methodist chapel who has not been recommended to the ministry by the Quarterly Meeting of the Circuit to which he belongs. All this, I apprehend, is contrary to the essential principles of the Church of England. How could these provisions be fitted into

harmony with an organization in which the sole and absolute power of the clergy, as such, to admit to communion or to repel, is, however it may be in practical abeyance, a fundamental principle, and in which the law of patronage remains supreme? Moreover, it would be impossible for the Church of England to admit all Methodist ministers, merely as such, to take full pastoral rank and authority in the administration of the sacraments. To do so would be to renounce the dogma of sacerdotal succession, and to admit that the validity of orders has no relation to episcopal authority. And, on the other hand, it is certain that neither the Methodist people nor their ministers would endure a word of re-ordination, or consent to the relinquishment of the right of sacramental administration.

Besides, it is just as likely that Methodism should absorb Anglican Episcopacy as that Anglican Episcopacy should absorb Methodism. Methodism has already, within the network of its own sister or daughter churches, a more wide-spread and a more numerous connection and communion of churches—a vaster host of adherents—than Anglican Episcopacy can sum up in all its branches and correlatives. As a world-power, Methodism is much the more potent in its operation and influence. For the Church of England (so called) now to absorb Methodism would be a portentous operation. It would be more hazardous than to put new wine into old bottles.\*

---

\* In a letter which appeared in the *Times* in September, 1867, the Rev. L. H. Wiseman furnished the following statistics: "In the United Kingdom there are belonging to the original Wesleyan Society 356,727 recognised and registered members. Careful inquiries have shown that for every member three other persons may be added, either as regular hearers though not avowed members, or as children of members who are being brought up in the faith of their parents; thus giving a total of a million and a half of adherents. In Australia, the West Indies, Canada, and other colonies where the English language is spoken, the number calculated in the same way will be about 573,000 more. The several bodies which have separated on disciplinary grounds—none of them on any doctrinal ground—from the original society, number in England and the colonies 288,000 members, or 1,152,000 adherents. It will thus be seen that in England and its dependencies considerably over three million persons are attached to the Methodist communions. If we turn to the United States a recent return places the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church at 1,700,000; the numbers cannot be given at present with absolute exactness from some of the churches in the South. It is generally estimated, however, in the United States, that this church numbers not less than seven million adherents; and there are, in addition, as is the case in England, minor bodies which have separated from the parent Church, though still holding the Methodist name and discipline, whose followers may be estimated at a million

But surely, in all reason and decency, the Church of England should heal her own breaches before her Congresses give sittings to consider how to effect the inclusion and reconciliation of Nonconformists within her own pale. There are three parties within the Church of England—High, Broad, and Low. If the High are to reconcile Nonconformists with themselves, Nonconformists must embrace Apostolic Succession and Sacramental efficacy—in fact, embrace that which, in its essentials, is Popery. If the Nonconformists are to be reconciled on the principles of the Low-Church, they must contrive to harmonise evangelical Calvinism or Arminianism, as the case may be, with the Prayer-book, if not also with the fabulous hypothesis of Apostolical Succession, which, fascinating dream as it is to the strange vanity of Churchmen, is held by some even among the Low-Church clergy. If, again, Nonconformists are to be reconciled on the principles of the Broad-Church, they must make up their minds to accept a latitude of faith and construction in matters of religion which will dissolve all definite theology and all distinctions between faith and unbelief, between the Church and the world, doing away at the same time with all Church discipline and with all real and earnest Christian fellowship.

In good sooth, however, there are but two theories on which the Church of England can, as a matter of principle, affect to reclaim to itself all “the Sects.” These are—the High-Church theory, which demands submission from all as of right, and

---

more. Putting all these members together, it will appear that the several branches of the Methodist communion number between eleven and twelve million persons in those countries where the English language is spoken. Taking the same area of comparison, what now is the number of adherents to the Anglican communion? To begin with the United Kingdom, it is well known that in Scotland and Ireland they form only a small part of the population; but in England they probably equal all the Nonconforming bodies put together. . . . Allowing for Ireland and Scotland, it appears a fair calculation to allow to her eight millions of adherents in the United Kingdom. As to the colonies, computation is difficult. Throughout Canada and Australia the number of Methodist clergy and places of worship greatly exceeds the number belonging to the Church of England; for example, the number of Methodist clergy in Canada last year was 1,003, and of Anglicans, 459; but let it be supposed that the number of Churchmen in the colonies is a million, or nearly double the number we have put down for the Methodists, and let the Anglicans in the United States, whose communicants have been estimated at 250,000, be put down at a million or a million and a half more, the total number of adherents will then be ten millions or ten millions and a half against the eleven millions and upwards belonging to the Methodists.”

counts Nonconformity to be the deadly sin of schism ; and the Broad-Church theory, according to which the Church is co-extensive with the nation, and every Englishman, as such, is a member of Christ.

Methodists equally repudiate both theories. They reject the mediævalism of the one, and they detect, however disguised, the intrinsic infidelity of the other. They understand by schism an uncharitable division in a church, not a necessary separation from it. They pray themselves, on behalf of the Church of England, tainted as it is with the leprosy of Popish superstition, and distracted with incurable divisions, that God would be pleased to deliver it from "false doctrine, heresy, and schism." They do not desire to see Christendom distributed into merely national Churches, which could not be truly spiritual communities, nor to see one only church prevail, whatever might be its name, although they would not needlessly multiply denominations. They would leave the free influence of the truth, under the power of the Spirit, so to mould and adapt Churches in the midst of nations and of the world, as to exhibit the Gospel and its fellowship according to the several aspects and modes best adapted, on the whole, to bring out into living power the manifold variety and fulness of the Gospel, and to produce the highest and richest total effect upon the nations and the world at large.



## APPENDIX.

THE following is a list of books and pamphlets relating to the subjects with which I have dealt in the foregoing pages:—

- Authorised Report of the Church Congress held at Wolverhampton*, October 1—4, 1867. London: Macmillan and Co. 1867.
- The Guardian Newspaper. Supplement*, Wednesday, February 12, 1868. Report of the Meeting of Convocation for the Province of York.
- Methodism and the Established Church*. By the Rev. WILLIAM ARTHUR, M.A. *London Quarterly Review* for July, 1856.
- Life of Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.* By THOMAS JACKSON. Two vols. 8vo. London: Wesleyan Conference Office. 1841.
- An Answer to the Question, Why are You a Wesleyan Methodist?* By THOMAS JACKSON. Sixth Edition. London: Wesleyan Conference Office. 1860.
- The Church and the Methodists*. Being the Substance of a Speech addressed to the Wesleyan Conference in 1834. By THOMAS JACKSON. Wesleyan Conference Office. 1834.
- The Life of Peter Böhrer*. By the Rev. J. P. LOCKWOOD. *With an Introduction on the Early Religious Life of the Wesleys*. By the Rev. THOMAS JACKSON. Wesleyan Conference Office. 1868.
- The Question, Are the Methodists Dissenters? Fairly Examined*. By SAMUEL BRADBURN. 1792.
- A Reply to a Pamphlet, entitled, "Considerations on a Separation of the Methodists from the Established Church."* By HENRY MOORE. Bristol. 1794.
- The Crisis of Methodism; or, Thoughts on Church Methodists and Dissenting Methodists, including Strictures on Mr. KN\*X's "Considerations" and "Candid Animadversions," &c.* By JONATHAN CROWTHER, P.G. Bristol. 1795.\*
- Primitive Methodists, in an Address from the Trustees of Broadmead and Guinea Street Chapels in Bristol to the Methodist Conference, and to all the Societies, &c.* Published by Order of the Trustees. Bristol. (Dated July, 1795.)
- A Vindication of the People called Methodists, in Answer to a "Report from the Clergy of a District in the Diocese of Lincoln," in a Letter to Thomas Thompson, Esq., of Hull.* By JOSEPH BENSON, a Preacher among the Methodists. London. 1800.
- The Church and the Wesleysans. Their Differences shown to be Essential*. Oxford: J. H. Parker. 1848.
- Pastoral Advice of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* London: Masters and Co.
- The Church and Wesleyanism*. A Letter by the Rev. P. G. MEDD. London: Rivingtons. 1868.
- The Church and the Methodists*. By the Rev. C. HOLLAND HOOLE. 1868.
- History of Wesleyan Methodism*. Three vols. By G. SMITH, LL.D. London: Longmans.
- History of Methodism*. By ABEL STEVENS, D.D. Three vols. New York. London: Trübner and Co.

\* P. G. stands for "Preacher of the Gospel." Mr. Bradburn's pamphlet, of which the title is given above, is a most acute and masterly compendium of the whole question. Nothing can be more skillful than the way in which, without a word wasted or the colour of exaggeration, he puts his points, and nothing can be finer than the spirit in which he writes. His argument is exhaustive. He shows, amongst other things, that if the authorities of the Church of England had been willing, it might have been possible to accomplish, eighty years ago, such a union of Methodism with the Established Church as is now desired by such Churchmen as Mr. Medd and Mr. Lyttelton. We may here note that Mr. Medd has, like others before him, adopted from Mr. Alexander Knox (the Mr. KN\*X of Mr. Crowther's pamphlet) some charges as to the mutilation of Wesley's journals by the Methodist authorities which are altogether untrue. A full refutation of these may be seen in Dr. Stevens' *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 450. Mr. Medd should not take all his knowledge and ideas about Wesley and Methodism from Southey's *Life*.



10) = fold 3









BX  
5129.8  
M4  
R5  
1868a

**THEOLOGY LIBRARY  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA**

A17189



